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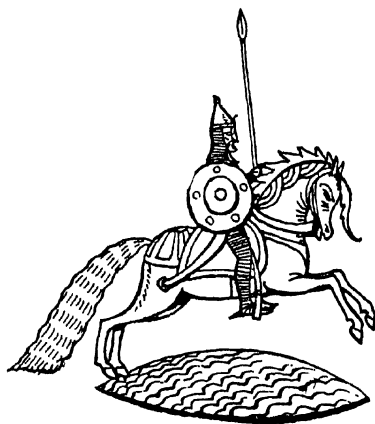


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THE PAGEANT OF RUSSIAN HISTORY

BY
ELIZABETH SEEGER

DECORATIONS AND MAPS BY
BERNARD WATKINS
AND
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FOREWORD

It is already a truism that the world is one; and yet it is alarming how little we know about our neighbors in what is ever becoming a closer and more interdependent community. In order to achieve the peace for which every sane person longs, we must know our neighbors both as individuals and as nations; for nationality is still the most powerful factor in making war and in making peace and must be understood before it can be sublimated into a higher and more universal loyalty.

Nations are organisms, aggregates of succeeding generations of human individuals: they differ as individuals differ; heredity and environment play their parts, the latter more powerfully in the nation than in the individual, for the nation cannot escape its environment. They have their particular skills and arts; each has worked out or acquired a philosophy with which it encounters the common problems that life presents. Each also has its life history, its peculiar experience, different from that of any other, and as important to the nation and to each one of its people as his own experience is to any individual. It is this na-
YOUNG PEOPLE

tional experience, recorded in history, that we must know if we are truly to understand the people of other countries.

Examine yourself, O reader: consider that piece of earth on which you and your ancestors have lived: its landscape, its skies, its produce, its villages and cities and shores. How important is it to you? And the history of your country: its traditions and sources, its struggles, its government, its heroes and poets, its arts and industries: how important are they? So important are theirs to other people, and even more so to older nations than to young ones like those of the Americas, because of their longer duration and richer accumulated content.

The nations of the world are becoming acquainted late in life, with the exception of those whom proximity or common interests have long ago brought together. It is like making friends in middle age. When that happens, sooner or later the friends relate to each other their early experience — their childhood and youth, their marriage and maturity — if the friendship is real and lasting. Even so, nations must know each other's history; for one of the great and lasting benefits of modern science is that it has discovered the profound impression that early experience leaves upon a human creature.

On no country or people, I believe, has its early history left a more powerful impress than it has upon Russia. Its home: the almost infinite and often mournful plain, with the violent climate that imposes a physical hardship unknown in many countries, and the lack of any natural defenses; its isolation from both East and West, basically geographic, which led to a profound religious, political and cultural sundering; its polarity towards Byzantium instead of Rome, also due to the simplest geographical compulsions: these and many other circumstances of its environment determined the direction of the currents of Russia's history.

The shock of the Tartar invasion and the long subjection to an alien and violent people came to Russia in the heyday of its youth, a gay and promising youth. It left a scar not unlike that

which a shocking experience, suffered in youth, leaves upon an individual: it has never been forgotten; later invaders are always likened to the Tartar. The long struggle for independence and its final triumph are proud memories, as comparable events are to other nations. Even after its independence was won, Russia was not wholly free from Tartar invasions, which kept its memories alive, until the end of the eighteenth century, when the armies of Catherine the Great finally cleared the rich southern steppe of their perennial enemies.

From the reign of that remarkable woman on, the history of Russia is perhaps as well known in western Europe and America as that of the other great European countries. Yet the autocracy that is familiar to us, the long survival of serfdom, the century-long struggle for freedom and the cataclysmic turn which that struggle took in 1917 — all these are better understood if their sources and their causes are known.

It is well, too, to know the things that are dear to other peoples: their legends, their saints and heroes, their arts. The heroic legends of Russia — the *bylinas* — rank with those of King Arthur or Charlemagne or with the Icelandic sagas and have a unique and delightful character of their own. The folk tales, too, with a touch of the Orient and an extravagance characteristically Russian, have been an unending source of the later and more highly developed arts. How well are these known to us? What do we know of the many saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church; of the heroes who defended or freed their people or rose in hopeless rebellion to help them? I was shocked to discover, when I looked for a biography of that noble warrior, Alexander Nevsky, that there were a hundred books about him in Russian and not a single one in English. So, too, the only popular English version of the *bylinas* is now out of print.

There is great need of further translation of Russian history, biography and fiction.

Meanwhile, perhaps, any effort to present a simple and understandable history of this remarkable and increasingly important

people may be of use. It is because there are so few books that are suitable for young people, and for those adults who do not want to labor through a long and scholarly work, that I dare to offer, in all humility, this short volume.

New York
April 1950

ELIZABETH SEEGER

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THE PAGEANT OF
RUSSIAN HISTORY



CHAPTER I

FOREST, STEPPE AND RIVER

STRETCHING HALFWAY ROUND the earth from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, from under the North Pole to the Equator, lies the great continent that we call Europe and Asia. The greatest civilizations of the world have arisen along its sea-coasts, in its river valleys, on the islands that were once a part of it and now lie close to its shores.

We call it two continents but it is really one. Europe is its largest peninsula: the boundary dividing Europe from Asia is no real boundary: it is only a dotted line on a map. For the mountains that twist and heave from the Alps across the Caucasus and the Pamirs to Bering Strait and Malaya are one mountain system, and the flat plain that stretches from the North Sea nearly to the Sea of Okhotsk, from Iran to the Arctic Ocean, is one plain, broken only by the mild range of the Ural Mountains which leave hundreds of miles of open, rolling land to the south of them. If any proof is needed that the land is one, Russia is the proof, for, on the map, the dotted line between Europe and Asia runs across its vast territory without dividing it in any way.

The Russian Empire, now called the Soviet Union, is one country, stretching from the Pacific Ocean to the Baltic Sea.

The greater part of the enormous plain has been the scene of Russia's history. Its openness to the east and to the west, its lack of any natural boundaries, its forest and steppe, its soil and its climate have powerfully affected the history, the character, and the actions of the people.

Almost all of the great plain was once covered with thick forest. In the west, as far north as the shores of the Gulf of Finland, was a forest of broad-leaved trees — oak and beech, linden, ash and maple — mixed with pine and fir trees. The vast eastern and northern forest was made up of fir and pine trees, laced by the delicate leaves and branches of the birch. Still farther north, along the Arctic Ocean, the forest died out: only moss and low bushes could grow on that frozen soil.

Toward the center of the vast continent, however, the forest was broken by stretches of meadow; gradually the trees disappeared and, from horizon to horizon, there was nothing but tall, waving grass, for hundreds of miles from north to south, for thousands of miles from west to east. This grassland is called the steppe. In the central regions, the grass begins to get dry and scant and finally the steppe turns into desert. For all life depends upon rain, which comes from the oceans and cannot reach the heart of Asia.

The flatness of the plain lays it bare to the extremes of heat and cold. Icy winds and blizzards sweep down from the Arctic in winter, and there is nothing to stop them. The whole land, then, from north to south, is blanketed in snow. The rivers that flow south into the Caspian and the Black seas are frozen solid for their whole length, just as those rivers are that flow north into the Arctic Ocean. Winds blow in from the seas in summer, but there are no mountains to make them pour out their life-giving rain. The grass of the steppe is burned dry, in midsummer, by the heat. These extremes of climate are most violent in

the center of the continent, which is far from any ocean; but they are felt, too, all over the Russian land.

The Russian people grew up in the forest, north of the steppe, above the 50th degree of latitude; where winters are long and bitterly cold and the winter day is short and dark; where even the spring is swift and violent, flooding the rivers with the melting snow and ice; where the summers are short and hot and the autumn rainy, turning the soil into mud.

The plain made life difficult and dangerous; it bred a powerful and patient people.

The Russians are Slavs, a branch of the great Indo-European people who, thousands of years ago, moved into Europe and India and Persia and settled along the warm and temperate sea-coasts of the western and southwestern part of the continent. The Slavs are a young people: the Aryans in India, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans had built up great civilizations before the Slavs were heard of. They were barbarians, living by hunting and fishing in the forests north and east of the Carpathian Mountains, when the Roman Empire was divided into a western and an eastern empire, with Rome as the capital of the West and the proud and beautiful city of Byzantium, on the strait that leads from the Black Sea to the Aegean, as the capital of the East.

When the Western Roman Empire fell, and the barbarous tribes who lived on its edges swarmed into Europe, the Slavs, who had been growing greatly in numbers, separated; some moving south into the Balkan Peninsula, which belonged to the Eastern Empire; some going north toward the Baltic Sea, and others moving eastward, following the rivers through the thick forests. The descendants of these Slavic people still live in the places where they settled then, in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. Those who turned their backs on the parts of the world that had been civilized by the Romans, and went east and north-east into the wilderness, became the Russian people.

They were a tall, sturdy, white-skinned race, with gray or blue eyes and light-brown hair. They settled along the northern course of the Dnieper River and along the rivers that run into it. They cleared small fields and raised rye and barley and flax for linen clothes. The rivers were full of fish and the woods were full of animals whose fur grew thick and sleek to keep them warm during the hard winter. Men hunted and fished, robbed the wild bees of their honey and the animals of their furs. The river was the center of their lives, for it was easier to travel on its waters than to break a way through marsh and forest. Their settlements were small villages of log cabins, each village surrounded by a wall of earth and a wooden stockade, very like the frontier settlements in the early history of America. They traded back and forth, the southern villages sending grain, honey and linen to the northern ones who sent in return furs and salt. They made boats out of hollowed tree trunks and out of maple wood they made musical instruments, for they loved music and broke the lonely silence of river and forest with their songs. On the highest ground outside the villages they raised rough wooden images of Perun, the thunder god, or of Veless who protected the cattle and the sheep. In the long winter evenings they told stories of fairies and wood spirits and of the heroic deeds of men.

They soon explored beyond the Dnieper and found other rivers so near that they could drag their light boats over the marshy ground from one stream into another. From the Dnieper they carried their boats to the Dvina, from the Dvina to the Lovat; they floated down the Lovat into Lake Ilmen, crossed it and came out into the Volkhov River, which took them into the great Lake Ladoga. They built their cabins along these northern rivers and explored still farther. The little river Neva * took them from Lake Ladoga into the salt waters of the Gulf of Finland and the Dvina carried them to the Gulf of Riga. There they met traders and hunters from other northern lands and there they sometimes

* *The modern names of all these rivers are used.*

saw the high gilded prows and the bright sails of Viking ships from Sweden and Denmark.

They ventured downstream also and came out cautiously upon the open steppe. The steppe was dangerous because, as far back as man could remember, tribes of horsemen had wandered over it, pasturing their herds of horses, cattle and sheep upon the rich grass, living in round tents of felt which they picked up and carried north in the summer and south in the winter, changing their encampments as the seasons changed.

These nomadic people were fierce fighters; they fought on horseback with bows and arrows and every man was a warrior. The steppe stretched for thousands of miles into Asia where the ground was too dry for farming and even the pasture was poor. Hordes of these wandering people came westward, seeking better land, and ruled over the steppe, one driving out or conquering another. For hundreds of years the Scythians had held the rich land, then the Sarmatians. The Huns had swept over it like a tempest, riding far into Europe, threatening both Rome and Byzantium. Yet all these hordes had come and gone again, leaving the waving grassy steppe exactly as they found it, except for the burial mounds that they raised above their kings and chieftains and that still stand there and serve as lookouts for shepherd boys who watch their flocks.

It was fortunate for the Slavs that at the time when they brought their boats out from the shelter of the forest a mild and civilized tribe of nomads was ruling the steppe. They were the Khazars, Asiatic people who had built a city at the mouth of the Volga and traded with the merchants of Persia and Byzantium. They welcomed the Slavs and visited their small settlements, offering knives and swords, silver and gold ornaments and glass beads in exchange for furs, wax and honey. They offered their protection to the Slavs, demanding tribute from them in the form of furs — so many skins from each household — in return for which the Slavs were free to use the southern rivers and to

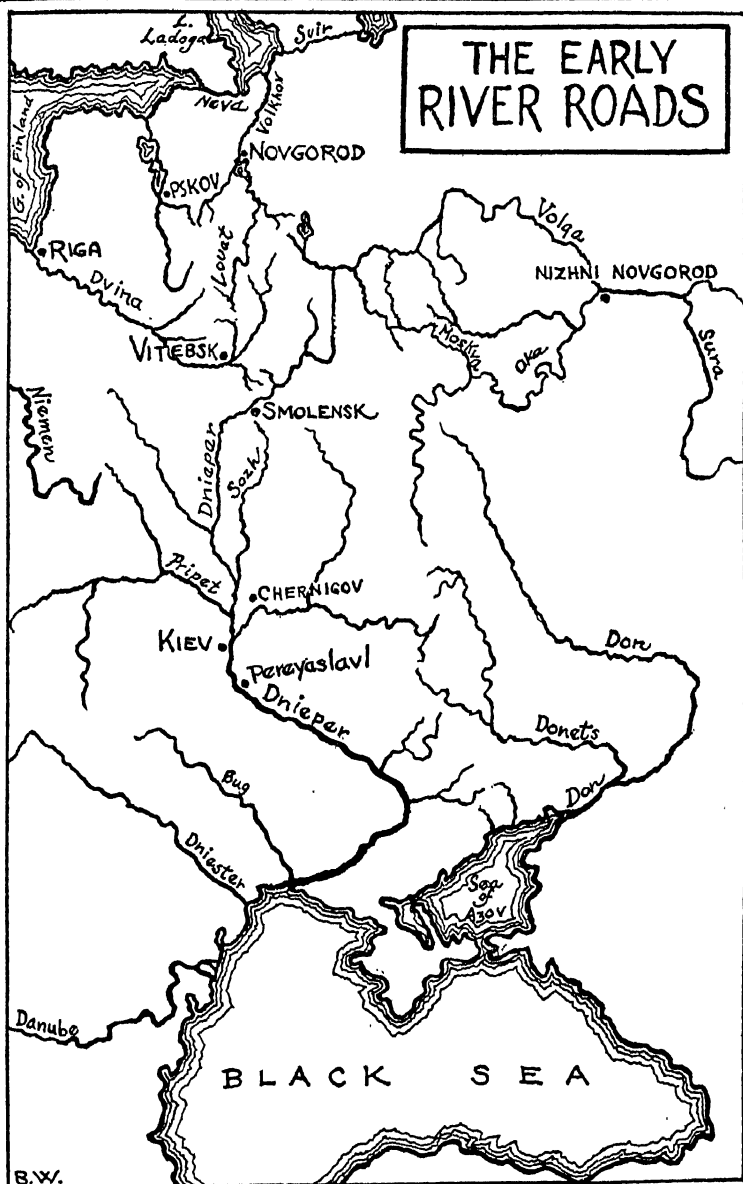
trade in the Khazar city or in the prosperous cities on the Black Sea that belonged to the Eastern Roman Empire.

So the dugout boats, laden with furs and honey, floated down the slow current of the Dnieper into the blue waters of the Black Sea. There the Slavs saw white-walled towns, with fine houses and gardens and domed churches; they entered the harbors and markets and met richly dressed merchants from Byzantium, the glorious city which no barbarian had been able to destroy, and which, for a thousand years, kept within its walls the learning and the love of beauty of the Greeks, the laws and the government of Rome and the religion of the Christians.

The whole river highway was open to them then, from north to south, and the villages grew into small towns where hunters and farmers brought their produce and sold it to the merchants who took it to the northern and the southern ports and then explored still farther, seeking new markets on the rivers that ran to the east and to the west. For the land was so hard to clear and most of it was so poor even when cleared that the people could not live by farming alone; they needed things from other, more fertile lands and fortunately they had something that other people always wanted to buy — the furs of the innumerable little animals that lived in their forests. They became a country of trading towns: Novgorod, on the Volkhov River, north of Lake Ilmen; Polotsk and Vitebsk on the Dvina; Smolensk on the Dnieper; and far to the south, where the forest began to be broken by meadowland, Kiev, on a hill overlooking a broad bend in the river.

Both the rivers and the plain tempted the traveler and the adventurer, for both led off to wide horizons and offered no obstacle to travel. Nothing stopped the invader from coming in and nothing stopped the explorer from going out as far as his fancy might take him. Along the rivers the Slavs met the peoples of Europe and Asia; along the rivers and the steppe other peoples came into the land where the Slavs had made their

THE EARLY RIVER ROADS



home. Their history, therefore, is filled with the meeting and mingling of many peoples.

Their recorded history begins when they reached the northern and the southern ends of their river highway. For the Vikings, at the north, brought their scattered settlements together and gave them their first government; while they learned their religion, their arts and their culture from Byzantium, far to the south.

The Vikings

OUT OF the mists of the Baltic Sea, up the Dvina and up the Volkhov, one summer in these early days, came the Viking fleets. Their vessels were slim and beautiful, with high prows and sterns, the prows often decorated with gilded dragons' or serpents' heads; the ships were painted in bright colors, red or blue or striped with white, their square sails also striped with color, while gay pennons fluttered above them. Rows of shields with gleaming metal rims and centers were hung along the gunwales and behind the shields sat strong, fair-haired men, wielding the long oars that sped the vessel on. Helmeted warriors, holding their spears and swords, sat on the raised bows and sterns, and every man was a trained athlete and soldier, chosen for his strength and courage and agility.

These were dangerous people. During the sixth and seventh centuries they grew restless in their homes in Scandinavia and Denmark, and their fleets came like flights of arrows against the coasts of northern Europe. They sailed up the rivers and ravaged the countries, killing the people mercilessly, burning down towns and churches and villages, filling their ships with food and treasure and sailing away again. Sometimes they conquered and settled, as they did in northern France and England; some bold sailors took their fleets into the open ocean, reached the Mediterranean and Aegean seas, and robbed and conquered there. Others braved the Atlantic; they discovered and lived in Iceland and Greenland and reached America, which they called

Vineland. They left their mark, for good or for evil, on every land that their prows touched, but nowhere was their coming more important than it was to the little towns where the Slavs were living.

They must have been a fine sight when they first appeared before the small wooden settlements, whose inhabitants crowded out, curious and alarmed, to look at them. We have no record of their coming, for it happened before the history of this part of the world was written. We do not know whether the Vikings killed and burned at first as they usually did, or whether they anchored their ships peacefully and came ashore to see what sort of people lived here. It seems probable that this was what they did; for they could see there was no treasure here and nothing to be gained by violence. They were traders as well as pirates; they soon saw that they could do better by trading with these people than by killing them. The Slavs looked admiringly at the fine clothes, the chain mail, the long swords and broad axes, the finely wrought gold and silver ornaments of the Viking chiefs; they brought out all their different furs — sable and mink and beaver, fox and marten — to offer in exchange. The newcomers settled along the Baltic coasts and became familiar visitors.

They soon found, or were shown, the waterways. Their ships were much larger than those of the Slavs, but they were used to running them up on shore during the winter or when they were not in use, and did not find it hard to take them from river to river. Sometimes they put rollers under them; sometimes they lifted the ships on their strong shoulders and carried them over the land. They sailed down the Dnieper into the Black Sea; they found the way to the Volga and the Don and reached the Sea of Azov, on whose southern shore they built a settlement. They visited the cities of the Eastern Roman Empire, where they were delighted by the fine silks and brocades, the embroidered linens and jewels, for they loved color and finery. They were known there and among the Slavs as Varangians, and their

swift vessels with their colored sails were soon a familiar sight in every port and in every settlement on the banks of the river road.

They used these highways constantly. The broader, more sober merchant vessels followed the war fleets; they stopped at the Slav towns, traded with them and went on their way. Sometimes a pirate fleet would raid a village, carrying off women and children to be sold as slaves in the markets on the Black Sea. Varangian chiefs settled in several Slav towns and the people were glad to have them, for they were splendid sailors and fighters; the Slav boats could join the Varangian fleets and sail south under their protection; one chief could protect the town against another. The Slavs began to depend on these northern men who were more civilized than they were; for the Varangians took counsel together, made plans and carried them out, and obeyed their chiefs. They had laws and understood government and this was something the Slavs badly needed.

For the Slavic towns were far apart, the settlements scattered through a wilderness, and many a hunter's or fisherman's family lived in some isolated cabin deep in the forest and far from any other dwelling. The family was ruled by its oldest member, the village by an elder chosen by the people; but each group lived by and for itself and there was nothing to unite them. They quarreled, if there was cause for a quarrel, and fought to decide their differences. They could not defend themselves against an enemy, nor enlarge their territory or their trade.

There is an old chronicle, written in the eleventh century, which tells us all that we know about this early history. According to this, the people of Novgorod, who lived closest to the land of the Varangians, despaired of ever keeping the peace by themselves and, in the year 862, sent across the sea to a Varangian chief whom they knew and trusted. "Our country is large and has an abundance of everything," their messengers said, "but there is no order or justice amongst us. Come and take possession of the land and govern us."

The Vikings were always ready to go off on a new adventure or to colonize a new land; a man named Rurik and his two brothers answered the appeal of the men of Novgorod. They took their families and many companions and retainers, with *their* families, and in a fleet of gay, proud ships they crossed the Baltic and the Gulf of Finland and sailed along the Neva into Lake Ladoga. These Varangians were called Russian Varangians or "men of Rus"; they brought this name with them into the great country that now stretches from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific, from the Arctic Ocean to the Black and Caspian seas. Rurik built a fortified village at Ladoga at first, until he was quite sure that he was really wanted. The Slavs were usually hard-working and patient people but, at times, when a Viking chief demanded too much tribute or acted in a high-handed way, they had risen in a fury and had driven him out.

Novgorod, however, was growing into an important trading town, the chief market at the northern end of the river road; they needed the strength and skill of the Varangians to send their ships safely down the hundreds of miles to the Black Sea ports as much as they needed the laws and the justice they had asked for. So Rurik soon came to live there, and his brothers made their homes in other towns. It is possible that Rurik gave its name to Novgorod, which means "New Town," for he certainly made it a finer place than it had been before. He probably built a great hall for himself, such as chieftains had in his own land, decorated with wood carving and brightly woven hangings, where he could meet with his councillors to plan for war or for a trading expedition or to judge a quarrel and apply the laws that he had learned at home. He sent his captains to the scattered towns along the northern rivers and ruled over the whole region from the source of the Lovat to Lake Ladoga, from the Gulf of Finland to the upper reaches of the Volga.

Two of his companions, Askold and Dir, restless and bold as true Vikings were, left him and with a few ships followed the rivers into the Dnieper and sailed south. They came to Kiev;

saw the town on the height overlooking the bend of the river and liked it. "Whose is this town?" they asked, coming ashore. "It was built by Kiy and his brothers long ago and is named after him," they were told. "But Kiy is now dead and we pay tribute to the Khazar horsemen of the steppe." Askold and Dir stayed there and ruled over the town and the land around it; other Varangians joined them until there was a great number of them there and many ships lay anchored in the stream or drawn up on the shore.

Some of these men told Askold and Dir about the great city of Byzantium, with its untold wealth, both in money and beautiful goods; and they made a daring and foolhardy plan. Nothing daunted the Vikings; rich cities and countries had fallen before them time and again. Why not attack Byzantium and carry off all the wealth that their ships could hold? The two chiefs sent word up and down the river, calling to them every vessel, Varangian or Slav, that might be near. It is said that two hundred ships assembled at Kiev, holding several thousand men. They heard, from ports at the mouth of the river, that the Byzantine Emperor had gone with his army into Asia to fight the Saracens, while the navy had sailed to protect Sicily, at the other end of the empire. This, then, would be a good time for a raid.

Askold and Dir led their ships down the river, along the western shore of the Black Sea, through the beautiful wooded strait of the Bosphorous, and appeared suddenly before the splendid city. Its citizens crowded to the walls and looked with alarm at this horde of small ships; they had been attacked and besieged by every sort of barbarous people and their fleet was away. The men on the ships, too, who had come through so many miles of silent forest, so many miles of empty steppe whose tall grasses stretched away to the horizon, looked amazed at the busy harbor of the Golden Horn, crowded with merchant ships, at the palaces and gardens sloping to the water's edge, at the strong walls guarding the innumerable roofs of the city, at the great shallow dome of the Cathedral of St. Sophia, rising

above all other buildings. How could they attack such a place as this?

It seems that they could not, for when the Emperor and the navy, summoned in haste to defend the city, returned, the Varangian ships still lay in the harbor and were no match for the larger, stronger warships of the Byzantine navy. With the help of a storm, they were scattered and driven back; Askold and Dir returned to Kiev, but the Byzantines remembered that in the north the men of Rus had grown strong enough to dare to attack their city.

Rurik died in Novgorod and left his little son, who was only five or six years old, in the care of his most trusted companion, Oleg, a man who deserved his chieftain's confidence. He had greater plans for his new country than Rurik himself had ever tried to carry out.

As soon as the power was in his hands, Oleg assembled his army — a Russian army made up of Slavs, Varangians, Finns and other neighboring peoples — and embarked upon the rivers, sailing southward. He took Igor, Rurik's little son, with him. When the ships had been carried into the Dnieper, he stopped at Smolensk, the first important town below Novgorod. He brought his whole army ashore and they set up a fine array of tents, striped with bright colors.

The people of Smolensk sent their elder, an old man, to the newcomers.

"Who is it," he asked, "that comes with so much pomp to our city? Is it an emperor or a prince?" Oleg came forward, leading Igor, who wore a rich cloak over a bright tunic belted with gold, and a gold band on his yellow hair. "This," said Oleg, "is the Prince of all the Russians, Rurik's son." The citizens of Smolensk welcomed them gladly and swore to be loyal to Igor; and Oleg left some of his followers there to rule and guard the town.

The same thing happened at other towns along the river; but when Oleg drew near to Kiev he acted differently, for he was angry with Askold and Dir because they had left Rurik

and set up their own rule there. He left most of his fleet up the river and told some of his soldiers to hide themselves in the remaining vessels; then he approached Kiev and sent messengers to its two rulers. "We are merchants," they said, "who, in the name of Igor, son of Rurik, are on our way to Greece; come and see us, for we are your countrymen." Askold and Dir fell innocently into this trap; they came down to the river bank, where Oleg met them, holding Igor in his arms. "You are not princes," he told them sternly, "nor sons of princes. Behold, here is your master!" Then his soldiers sprang out of the ships and killed Askold and Dir.

Oleg took possession of the town and, as he climbed up the hill on which it stood and looked down at the broad bend of the river, he loved Kiev just as his two slain companions had loved it. He saw, too, how important it was because, being the southernmost city, close to the border where the forest broke and where the steppe began, it commanded the trade of the Russians with all the lands to the south. "This," he said, "shall be the mother of all Russian cities."

He settled there and made it his capital, fortifying it well with earthen ramparts and stockades and building other fortified towns. He either made war on all the surrounding tribes of Slavs or persuaded them that his protection was worth having. "To whom do you pay tribute?" he asked them, one after another. "To the Khazars of the steppe," they answered. "After this pay it to me alone," said Oleg, "for I am the enemy of the Khazars but I am not your enemy. You have nothing to fear from me." Tribute usually meant one skin per year from each household — black marten, fox or squirrel — a light tax, for he wished to gain their friendship and to unite them. From the time when he set up his rule in Kiev, the land from there up to Lake Ladoga began to be known as Rus and all its people were called Russians. This, according to the old chronicle, was the beginning of the Russian nation.

Byzantium, the Imperial City

OLEG STAYED in Kiev, putting the new country in order and gathering in the outlying settlements, until Igor had come of age and married. Then, since he could leave the government in the hands of the young prince, Oleg planned an attack on Byzantium. The reason for this warlike plan is not clear, but it is quite probable that, since the piratical raid of Askold and Dir, Russian merchants had not been welcome in the great city. Oleg was more than a pirate; he wanted to make treaties with the Byzantines that would make it safe for the Russians to trade there for as long as they wanted to; for he realized that the people of Rus depended on trade for their living and that Byzantium was their principal market. They called it Tsargrad—the imperial city, or the city of Caesar; for Tsar was a word derived from Caesar.

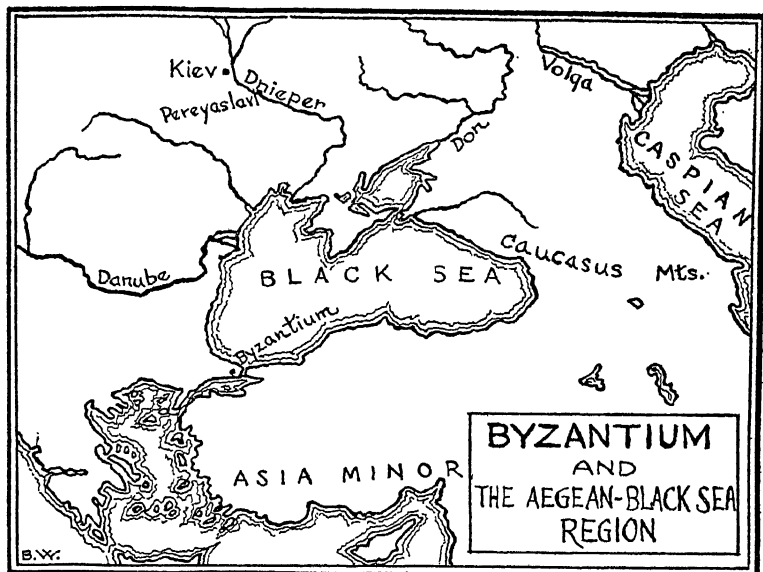
In 907 he assembled a great army of Slavs and Varangians; the chronicle says that he had two thousand ships. This is probably exaggerated, but he must have had several hundreds, carrying many thousand men. Oleg did not try to attack the strong walls of Byzantium, nor did he face the imperial navy in the harbor. He landed on the shores of the Bosphorus and, in the Viking style, began to ravage the peaceful countryside, burning villages and churches, killing and torturing the people cruelly, while those who were left fled into the city for refuge. Then Oleg ordered his men to carry their ships across the land in order to attack the city at a place where they were not expected. This act seemed a miracle to the Byzantine people, who never had to carry their boats across the land; and they were terrified by it as well as by the fire and slaughter that the Russians were bringing to their farms and villages.

The Emperor sent ambassadors to Oleg, who was encamped near the city, offering him gifts and peace; and Oleg, who called himself the Most Illustrious Grand Prince of Rus, made a trade treaty with him that was very favorable to the Russians. This was what he had come for.

By this treaty, Russian merchants were allowed to come to Byzantium every summer; while they were there they could live in the suburb of St. Mamo, where lodging and food and baths would be provided for them. They must not, however, enter the city in groups of more than fifty, and those fifty must be unarmed. They were not allowed to spend the winter, but must leave when their business was done. When they left, food would be given them for the return journey and their ships would be provided with sails, ropes, anchors and so forth, if they were needed. Agreements were also made about robbery or murder on either side; both parties agreed to help each other's ships to return safely home, if they were driven by storms or wrecked far from their own shores, and to take care of the crew or cargo if the vessel were destroyed; each would return the other's runaway slaves or criminals or prisoners wherever they might find them.

When the terms were arranged, Oleg's captains entered the city to take the oath, with the Emperor's officials, that they would faithfully keep the treaty. Dressed in coats of mail and helmeted, with cloaks of red or purple, blue or green, bordered with rich designs and clasped with gold, with their swords at their sides, the tall, fair-haired men were rowed by slaves across the harbor in one of the Emperor's splendid boats. They entered the gate and walked in the warm sunshine through blossoming gardens, past squares paved with marble, decorated with statues of emperors or of ancient Greek heroes and surrounded by magnificent stone buildings.

In one of these the treaty was read and agreed to; the Byzantine officials kissed a crucifix in token of their agreement, and the Russians raised their swords high in the air and swore by Perun and Veless that they would keep it faithfully. Then they were served with rich foods and wines in a hall whose walls were covered with mosaics: pictures of emperors and empresses in triumphal processions, designs of birds and animals and flowers, made by inlaying small cubes of colored glass into the walls,



against a background of gold. These mosaics were more brilliant in color and more lasting than any painting; they gleamed on the walls of the palaces and churches of the imperial city.

After the banquet the Byzantine ministers showed the Russians some of the beauties of the city: the many churches, the huge open Hippodrome, adjoining the palace, where everyone, from emperor to lowest citizen, came to watch the chariot races and the games. But what they most wanted their visitors to see was the main street of the great trading city, which ran west from the palace toward the gates that led into the pleasant suburbs beyond the walls. This street had arcades on either side and in them were the most important shops, filled with every sort of wealth and arranged according to their wares. Here were the goldsmiths, the silversmiths and jewelers, offering exquisite rings, necklaces and ornaments of every kind, as well as cups and dishes, embossed or inlaid with jewels. Here were silks and brocades and velvets, for the secret of making silk had been

brought from China several centuries before; there were ivory carvers, making delicate boxes decorated with hunting scenes or lives of saints; here were the perfumers, whose shops were fragrant with delicious scents. Here was porcelain from China and glass from Syria and Venice; sugar and cloves, pepper and cinnamon from the Indies and Ceylon, cotton from India, and furs — the Russians noted — from their own land.

Byzantium was the market where three continents — Asia, Europe and Africa — met and exchanged their goods. The caravans from the Far East, the ships of Europeans and Arabs came to the shores of the Black Sea and the eastern Mediterranean; and the most secure and convenient place of exchange was this city that had stood unshaken in a troubled world for six hundred years. The Byzantines, besides the money that they made by selling their own goods, collected duty on everything that came into their markets and on everything that went out; and a stream of money poured into the treasury of the city, making it the richest in the world. Only Baghdad, the capital of the Arab Empire that stretched at that time from India to Spain, only the exquisite cities of the Tang emperors of China could rival and certainly not surpass it.

It is no wonder that the Russians turned to Byzantium as flowers turn to the sun.

Oleg returned to Kiev triumphant after this encounter with the imperial city; a Byzantine historian says that the Russians were now "boundlessly proud and bold." His ships were loaded with cloth of gold and silver, with sweet wine and fruits, with jewels and fine clothes that the Emperor had given him. The people hailed him as a worker of magic. With Igor he set himself to bring all the towns and the surrounding people under the rule of Kiev, and to organize the trading expeditions that he had arranged for in the treaty.

The rulers of the towns were now called princes, while Oleg was called the Grand Prince. Each was like a king in his own

town and its surrounding region, but all were held together by the rivers and by their common need to trade.

Oleg asked tribute, or a tax, from everyone who was subject to him. A part of whatever a man produced must be brought to his prince; as it was impossible for many men to do this, the prince himself, with his "druzhina" or trusted companions, made a tour of his province and collected the tax, a certain part of which he sent to the Grand Prince. A great part of the tax was furs of all kinds — so much from each household. Beekeeping was also an important industry; in the spring and early summer swarms of bees came to the meadow flowers and to the fragrant clusters of linden blossoms. Honey was stored in jars and wax was pressed into cakes; sugar was still a great luxury, so that honey was welcome in Byzantine households, and wax was used to make candles for the beautiful ceremonies of the church and to polish the many-colored marbles that the Byzantines loved. Grain and flax were also collected and nearly every settlement had slaves to offer, for these were always in demand at the Black Sea ports. Some slaves were captured in war; sometimes the villages of distant tribes were raided and men, women and children were carried off and sold into slavery; others were sold as punishment for crime; some were Slavs and some were of enemy tribes.

When the first snow began to drift through the pines and firs, the princes started on their tours; for then the rivers were frozen, the paths through the forest and over the marshes were hard, and they could visit the most distant settlements. All winter they rode on horseback through their domains, carrying the goods they collected on sledges over the deep snow, returning before the first thaws.

As soon as the ice broke in the rivers in spring, they prepared their ships, loaded them and sailed southward to Kiev, where they assembled. Then, when all was ready, the fleet started on its way, the Grand Prince leading and the ships of the different towns following in the order of their importance: Chernigov

second, then Pereyaslavl, then Novgorod and Smolensk.

The journey was safe enough while the banks of the river were bordered with trees in their fresh spring foliage. The stream was broad and the current gentle. Then the woods began to be broken with patches of meadow; then the meadows, filled with flowers, were broken by patches of woods; finally the wide steppe, like an ocean of waving grass, stretched away to every horizon and the earth looked as round and flat as a coin. On the steppe they must keep a careful watch, for rough and cruel people, the Pechenegs, had blown like a wind across the plain, driving the Khazars to the south. A merchant fleet would be rich booty for these men; they hid in ambush behind the tall grass, ready to fall upon the Russians if they came ashore to hunt for fresh food or to repair a ship.

The Russians' greatest danger, however, came from the river itself. At one point the Dnieper turned eastward and, flowing between high cliffs, fell for several miles over rocky boulders that changed its waters into perilous rapids. Here the ships had to be unloaded and their cargoes carried along the banks while the ships themselves were towed or carried by slaves and by their crews past the rocks and the worst currents. Armed men watched for an attack by the Pecheneg horsemen while the boats were being loaded again with their precious cargo. If this danger was safely passed, the Grand Prince offered sacrifices of thanks to the gods and then led the fleet on its quiet way to the mouth of the river. There they landed on an island and prepared the ships for the more difficult ten-days' journey across the Black Sea. They kept close to its western coast, for there were sometimes violent storms on the sea; they often saw a cloud of horsemen following them along the shore in the hope that some ships might be wrecked there.

At last, all dangers past, they reached the strait of the Bosphorus, sailed along its pleasant wooded shores and turned gratefully into the deep, sheltering harbor of the Golden Horn.



CHAPTER II

THE GRAND PRINCES OF KIEV

Olga

IGOR, THE SON of Rurik, became Grand Prince of Kiev after Oleg died, and he followed in his guardian's footsteps. He was constantly at war; indeed, from the time when the land along the rivers from Ladoga to Kiev became known as "the Russian Land," war was its normal state. Since there were no natural boundaries, the nation's borders were made by the will of its leaders and by the courage of its people; the Russians were surrounded on all sides by other peoples, some friendly enough and some hostile, and the borders between their lands changed again and again. The Grand Princes were still Vikings at heart; when they were not attacked, they attacked their neighbors or tried again to realize their dream of taking Byzantium.

Igor led a great expedition there, in a fleet of a thousand ships, but he was driven back by the terrible Greek fire—a liquid flame shot out of tubes like modern flame throwers.

Only the Byzantines knew how to make this fire and it terrified their bravest enemies, for it not only burned their ships and horribly killed their men, but water could not quench it and it spread from ship to ship, blazing on the sea. The Russians fled from it, throwing themselves, armed, into the sea rather than face it. Igor, with a few of his vessels, escaped and returned to Kiev.

Undaunted by this defeat, he went back four years later with a land army as well as a war fleet; for he had persuaded the Pechenegs to join him, thus making allies of his natural enemies for the sake of revenge. When the Byzantine Emperor heard that the Russians, who were feared for their cruelty, and the barbarous Pechenegs were both coming against him, he sent ambassadors to Igor as his father had done to Oleg nearly forty years before, offering gifts and peace.

A new trade treaty was made and this time it was sworn to, not in the palace of Byzantium, but on the hill behind the wooden town of Kiev, where the Emperor's ambassadors had come. (It is possible to follow the growth of the Russian state by noting the increasing honors shown to its princes by the Byzantine rulers.) Some of the Russians swore to the treaty before the images of Perun and Veless, but some of them kissed the cross in a little church that had been built in Kiev in honor of St. Elias; for many Russians in their yearly journeys to the imperial city had entered the churches there and preferred the beauty of worship and the merciful teachings of Christianity to the rough wooden images of their own gods, to whom human sacrifices were often made.

On one of his winter tours to collect tribute, Igor visited a town to the west of Kiev. As he left, his sledges well laden with furs and grain, he brooded on the wealth of this town, for its men seemed better dressed and armed than his own. Finally he said to his retinue, "Go on ahead with these spoils; but as for me, I will take a few of you with me and go back, for I think that we can get still more." When they saw him return, the

citizens of the town went to their prince. "If the wolf is loose," they said, "he will not stop until he kills the whole flock. If Igor lives, he will take all that we have." They went out to meet him. "Why do you return?" they asked. "You have already taken a heavy tribute." And they fell on him and killed him and his followers.

His wife, Olga, with her young son, was left at the head of the Russian state. She was as strong-willed as her husband and considerably wiser. She took immediate and bloody vengeance on the men who had slain her husband; she rode with her son, who was then about fifteen, to war, and through all her domains to collect tribute. She went even as far as Novgorod and Pskov, carried along the frozen rivers on a sleigh, wrapped in warm furs and covered with fur rugs. She made it very clear to all the princes that she was the Grand Princess of Rus.

When her son was old enough to govern the country, she took the best of her ships and traveled to Byzantium. She did not go to ravage the shores of the empire with fire and sword, as Oleg had done, nor to defy its navy and flee before its terrible flame, as Igor had done; she went in peace, as an honored guest, the ruler of a neighboring country, and she was entertained by Emperor Constantine VII and his wife with all the beauty and ceremony of the Byzantine court.

Olga took with her a retinue of ladies and her serving-maids; several of the Russian nobles and chief merchants also accompanied her. Her fleet started down the river in midsummer and arrived about the first of September. She was received with honor, given luxurious lodgings in one of the many palaces, and told that the Emperor would receive her a few days later.

Olga was proud and the chronicle tells us that she was beautiful; she must have dressed in her finest clothes and jewels on that day. She and her retinue were led by the Emperor's courtiers through one splendid hall and courtyard, corridor and garden, after another; the bright autumn sun displayed the polished marble columns and their carved capitals, the pavements inlaid

with many-colored stones, the sculptured fountains, and over the roofs the gilded domes of churches. As they drew near to the throne room they walked on Persian carpets strewn with flowers. Crimson-silk curtains woven with bold and beautiful patterns were drawn aside, and to the sound of organ music the Russians found themselves in the presence of the Emperor.

At the other end of the spacious, vaulted hall he sat motionless, dressed in robes stiff with gold and jewels, on a high golden throne, while on either side of him the officials of the government were drawn up according to their rank and, beyond them, the palace guards stood holding their swords and shields. All were motionless and silent. On each side of the throne there was a golden tree with jeweled leaves among which were jeweled birds; in front of these sat two golden lions. As Olga was led forward by two courtiers, one on either hand, and the master of ceremonies announced her name, the golden lions, worked by a hidden mechanism, rose to their feet and roared and all the jeweled birds burst into song. When the lions and the birds were quiet, Olga's gifts were brought in — the best of the sables and ermine that she had collected from her provinces and handsome slaves from the town where Igor had been killed. Without another word being spoken, she was dismissed and led out, as the organs filled the hall with their music.

She was escorted again through endless corridors and courts, past silver doors with scarlet hangings, to a pavilion. There she waited with her ladies until they were summoned to another throne room to be presented to the Empress, who was surrounded by the wives of the government officials, dressed in their simple but splendid costumes, with jeweled headdresses and long veils. Their garments were made of silk or fine wool or Indian muslin, woven or embroidered in intricate patterns, bordered with gold or silver thread or bands of jewels. After this second reception, Olga met both the sovereigns in a more informal way and talked with them through her interpreters.

That same evening the Empress gave Olga and her ladies a

banquet, while the Emperor entertained the Russian nobles and merchants, who had accompanied her, in the golden banquet hall, the most splendid building among all his palaces. It was lighted by hundreds of small oil lamps placed in circular lamp holders hung by silver chains from the ceiling. Actors and dancers entertained the guests, and choirs from the Cathedral of St. Sophia sang the praises of the imperial family. The guests did not sit at the same table as their host, but at a distance and on a lower level; for the rulers of Byzantium could not acknowledge that anyone else in the world was their equal. The Emperor was not only the head of the Eastern Roman Empire, the heir of the Caesars, but he was also the head of the Church, the representative of God on earth. Although he might have been born a common soldier or a peasant, as soon as he was crowned he became a sacred person, worshipped by his subjects, responsible to God alone.

Before Olga left Byzantium, in time to sail up the Dnieper before the heavy frosts, she became a Christian and was baptized by the Patriarch of the Byzantine Church, who was appointed by the Emperor and held about the same position as the Pope did in Rome.

The Russian Princess was sent away with many rich gifts and must have been well-pleased, on the whole, with her visit. She was the widow of Igor, the son of Rurik; in two generations the land of Rus had grown from a handful of scattered, quarrelling trading towns into a young nation whose ruler was received with honor by the greatest sovereign of the Western world. She was probably impressed by all the splendor that she had seen and kept it in mind, for she, like Oleg, was ambitious for her country; but she was not humbled by it or in any way abashed. The next year Constantine sent her a message, asking her when she was going to send him some gifts that she had promised him when she left, and the story goes that she answered, "When you come to Kiev and stand around my palace as long as I stood in yours, I will give you all the gifts you want."

She had, however, very earnestly become a Christian and when she returned to Kiev she tried to make all the Russians there accept her new faith. Most of all she hoped that her son would be a Christian, but he laughed at her and said, "My companions would make fun of me."

The son of Olga was named Sviatoslav and this in itself was important, for it was a Slav name, while his predecessors — Igor, Olga, Oleg and Rurik — had all had Scandinavian names. It was an indication that the Vikings had mingled now with the Slavs and were no longer foreigners. Sviatoslav did not follow his mother's example in anything but was a warrior like his father and Oleg. He loved to fight and to be on the march, to cook his meat over the campfire and to sleep with his saddle for a pillow. Like the other Grand Princes, he was tempted to go south, both because of the wealth of the southern countries and because of their more kindly climate and fertile land. He was away for years campaigning against the Bulgarians, the Pechenegs and finally the Byzantines. He was terribly defeated by them and when he tried to return up the Dnieper with the remnant of his army, he was trapped at the rapids by the Pechenegs and killed. His skull was made into a drinking cup by the Pecheneg chief.

Olga's visit to Byzantium had not yet borne fruit.

Vladimir

WHEN SVIATOSLAV was killed by the Pechenegs he left a situation which, often repeated, led eventually to the downfall of the Grand Principality of Kiev.

Before he went on his final campaign he had put his eldest son at the head of the government at Kiev, his second son in another town and the youngest, Vladimir, in Novgorod. The brothers, however, did not like this arrangement; the eldest killed the second brother and Vladimir, fearing that he, too, might be killed, fled across the Baltic Sea to his Viking rela-

tions there. He was the strongest and ablest of the three brothers and did not stay long in exile. With a Viking fleet and army he returned in a few years, fought and killed his eldest brother, and became sole ruler of Rus. This brotherly quarrel was the first of many.

As Grand Prince, Vladimir took up the duties of government, trade and warfare. There were battles on the east and west borders against neighboring tribes of Finns or Slavs, and unceasing fighting against the Pechenegs on the south, who followed their herds across the steppe as freely as clouds move across the sky and who attacked the merchant fleets or the towns of Rus whenever they could. He also fought the Bulgars, a Turkish people who lived south of the Danube, and made a treaty of peace with them.

The Bulgars were Moslems; that is, they believed in the religion of Mohammed, the Arabian prophet whose teachings had given rise to the great Arab Empire that was so powerful at that time. The old chronicle tells us that their ruler admired Vladimir and sent envoys to him, saying, "You are a wise and able prince, but you have no law and no religion. Why do you not adopt ours?" "What is your religion?" asked Vladimir. "We believe in God," the envoys answered, "and our prophet has taught us that if we do not eat pork or drink wine we shall go to heaven and be waited upon, each one of us, by seventy beautiful women." This appealed to Vladimir, who had several wives and many concubines, but he said, "Drinking is the chief pleasure of the Russians and we could never live without it."

After that some Christian priests came to Kiev from Germany and they, too, tried to convert him to their religion, for this powerful Russian would make a very desirable ally and besides, at that time, missionaries were going out into northern Europe to persuade any peoples who were still pagan to become Christians. Vladimir listened to the Germans but did not commit himself.

The Khazars, whose capital city was on the Volga River, allowed the followers of all religions to live there in peace, but their rulers and many of their people had become Jews. They too sent Jewish priests to Vladimir, urging him to believe in "the true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." "Where is your country?" asked the Grand Prince. "In Jerusalem," they answered. "Why then do you not live there?" "God was very angry with our ancestors," they answered. "For our sins He has scattered us over all the countries of the world and has given our country into the hands of our enemies." "What!" cried Vladimir. "You are trying to teach others, you whom your God has punished? He would not have done that if he had loved you or your laws. Do you want the same thing to happen to us?"

The Byzantines soon heard that these envoys had gone to Kiev and they sent to Vladimir a learned Christian priest who explained to him the whole creation of the world and the purposes of God, according to the Bible, and showed him a painting of the Last Judgment. Vladimir sighed. "Happy are they," he said, "who enter Heaven, and woe unto those who must go into Hell." "You, too," the priest said quickly, "may go into Heaven if you will be baptized."

But the Russian Prince was in no hurry. He began to doubt the worth of his own gods but he wished to be quite sure of whatever religion he adopted. He sent ten trusted boyars, or nobles, to the countries which had tried to convert him and said to them, "Go and observe the religion of these people and see how they worship their God." So the boyars went to Bulgaria and to the Germans and were taken to their places of worship. Then they went to Byzantium and told the Emperor the cause of their visit. He rejoiced when he heard it and called the Patriarch, who was the chief priest, to him. "Prepare the church and the choir, as for a holy day," he said, "and put on your finest robes. Let the Russians see the glory of our God."

They were solemnly escorted to the Cathedral of St. Sophia (which means "the Divine Wisdom"), although pagans were not usually allowed within its holy doors. All the splendors of the imperial city had not prepared them for the wonder of this cathedral, which was at that time the largest and most beautiful building in the whole world and still is one of the greatest. After they had crossed the spacious western entrance hall and the silk hangings were drawn back from the central doorway, they found themselves in the enormous church whose golden vaulted ceilings were lost in the haze of light cast by the high windows and whose great central dome seemed to hang from Heaven, so high it was from the patterned marble pavement at their feet. The walls were made of panels of polished marbles, chosen for the beauty of their color and their veining, laid side by side to form symmetrical patterns suggesting flowers or trees or flowing rivers. Above the walls mosaic pictures of saints and apostles, in red or blue or green, gleamed against their gold backgrounds. The wide two-storied aisles on either side were separated from the nave by columns of green Thessalian marble in the upper story and of Egyptian porphyry below; in the upper galleries the ladies stood behind gold curtains, while the men, both courtiers and citizens, stood in the nave below.

Far ahead of the envoys, as they walked into the cathedral, rose the silver screen that hid the altar, the Holy of Holies, from the crowd of worshippers. In front of it were massed the singers and, as the strangers watched, the central door of the screen opened and the Patriarch, in splendid robes, surrounded by priests, came forward and mounted an open pulpit built of precious marbles and metals. When he intoned the scriptures, and the choir chanted the psalms and hymns; when the people fell on their knees, their faces uplifted with joy and adoration; when clouds of incense smoke drifted up across the shafts of light, veiling the silver screen and the golden ceiling, the Russian envoys were in a daze and hardly knew whether they were in

this world or out of it, for they had never imagined anything like this.

They returned up the river and Vladimir called all of his boyars and the elders of the city to hear their report. There was no doubt in the minds of the envoys. "We went to the Bulgars," they said, "but found no joy in their worship; we went to the Germans and found no beauty in theirs. Then we went to Tsargrad and we cannot tell you what we saw there; all we can say is that truly we found ourselves in the presence of God. We can never forget that beauty." One of his councillors who was listening said to Vladimir, "If the Christian faith were a bad one, your grandmother Olga, the wisest of women, would never have adopted it." "When shall we be baptized?" asked the Grand Prince, and they answered him, "Whenever you like."

Vladimir was proud; he was not going to ask for baptism as a suppliant or an inferior. He took his war fleet to the Black Sea and laid siege to the city of Kherson on the Crimean Peninsula, close to where Sevastopol now stands; Kherson belonged to the Byzantine Empire and was a busy and beautiful trading city. After a long siege he took it; the story goes that a traitor inside the city sent him a message tied to an arrow, telling him to cut off the water supply which came from springs outside the walls; by this means the people were forced to yield.

From Kherson, Vladimir sent a message to Byzantium, asking for the Emperor's sister in marriage, threatening to attack the capital if he were refused. The Emperor answered that he could not give his sister to a pagan, and then Vladimir said that he would gladly become a Christian; "for," he said, "I have been taught your religion and I love it and your way of worship." The Emperor invited him to come to Byzantium to be baptized and married, but again the Russian Prince's pride refused. He demanded that Princess Anna be brought to him at Kherson, where he would be baptized. So, with many tears, the Princess left the beauty and luxury of the palace and, with her ladies and courtiers and servants, set sail across the Black Sea to

marry this barbarous chief and to live with him in his wooden house in the cold northern forests.

Vladimir, like Olga, very sincerely became a Christian. When he returned to Kiev he overthrew the image of Perun with its silver head and golden beard, which he had himself set up, and had it thrown into the Dnieper; then he summoned all the people and in that same river had them all baptized at once, some standing up to their knees and others up to their necks in the water while the priest spoke the words that made them Christians. The same thing was done, in due course, in all the towns and principalities. A few people fled to the forest to escape these rites; a few wept as Perun was carried down the stream, but most accepted the new faith willingly because the old had meant very little to them. Vladimir himself was no longer the cruel and selfish man that he had been; he became more kind and just and asked the counsel of the Byzantine priests in all that he did.

Many priests came from Byzantium into Rus, for the people must be taught the new religion, churches must be built and services held in them; the Bible and other holy books must be translated into the Russian language. The Russians could not read or write at this time; indeed, they had no alphabet and hitherto had had no use for one. But, long before this, two Byzantine missionaries had made an alphabet for the Western Slavs and this could also be used for the Russian language. There was much for priests to do.

A new era began for the Russian land when Vladimir returned from Kherson with his bride. It was no longer a barbarous place, distant and isolated from other countries, known only by the yearly visits of its merchant fleets and its swift and terrible warfare. Now it was intimately linked, by blood relationship and religion, to the civilization of Byzantium, whose beliefs and thoughts and customs came up the rivers with the Princess and the priests and remained in Rus, a powerful influence in its growth and in its life, even to this day.

Yaroslav

YAROSLAV, THE son of Vladimir, continued nobly all that his father had begun. He invited scholars, monks and artists to Kiev from Byzantium and other parts of the Eastern Empire; he had Greek books translated and copied and he established a library; he built Kiev into a beautiful city that was admired by all travelers. He surrounded it with a high wall that had a stone gate called "The Golden Gate" after the one in Byzantium; he built a Cathedral of the Divine Wisdom, a new but smaller St. Sophia, several other churches and a monastery. It was very difficult to get stone in any part of Rus, but the workmen had learned to use brick, and the new churches were built solidly of brick overlaid with plaster and painted white, while the domes were gilded or tiled in blue or green or yellow.

The churches were decorated with gold and silver and jewels, as much like the Byzantine churches as possible. At first workmen in mosaic came to Kiev and inlaid the walls with gold and colors, but, since it was hard to get the right materials for that art, painting began to take its place and soon the images, or icons, of Christ and the apostles and the saints, or scenes from their lives, covered the walls and corridors of religious buildings. Russian architecture and painting, based on Byzantine models but with a character all their own, began to flourish in the eleventh century.

There were markets and shops in Kiev to which Scandinavian, German, Greek, Polish and Arab merchants came to exchange their goods. Rich merchants and nobles built handsome houses, made still of wood but ornamented outside with carved porches and windows and inside with Persian carpets and Byzantine hangings. In the eastern corner of the principal room, high up under the ceiling, there was always an icon, a small painting on wood of Christ, the Virgin, or a saint; a lamp burned night and day before it and everybody, as soon as they entered the room, bowed to it and crossed themselves.

Religion had become very important to all the people and played a great part in their lives. The beauty of worship that had amazed the envoys of Vladimir charmed all the people; they loved the mystery of the churches — the candle and lamp light, the gleam of gold and silver, the incense and the sound of the holy words. They had always loved music; with the teaching of the priests they began to sing and to compose the beautiful music of the Russian Church. There were many holidays in the course of the year, much fasting and much feasting. Some of their old holidays were carried over into the new: the festival of the winter solstice became the greater festival of Christmas; spring was celebrated with deeper meaning at Easter. In place of Perun they prayed to St. Elias; instead of Veless, they turned to the kind St. Nicholas. Though their life was dangerous and often cruel, the Christian teaching of love, humility and kindness found a quick response in their hearts.

In the Prince's palace and in the big houses there were often feasts, for the Russians loved to eat and to drink, to talk and to hear stories. They made a mead from honey and a sort of beer called "kvass" from fermented grain; they ate pheasants and swans, duck and geese, venison and wild boar, and after dinner many a thrilling story of adventure or battle was told. It might have been about a trading journey down the Volga into the market towns of the Caspian Sea, or an escape across the steppe from slavery, an attack by the Pechenegs at the rapids or a howling blizzard encountered on a tribute-collecting tour. Most often it was a tale of bravery in battle.

For Yaroslav, who was called the Wise and who did so much for the whole land of Rus, had his share of fighting. His father, Vladimir, left twelve sons as well as several daughters, for he had many wives before he married the Princess Anna and one more wife after she died. The eldest son killed three of his brothers; two of them, Boris and Gleb, were made the first saints of the Russian Church, because they had refused to fight against their brother and let themselves be murdered, unresist-

ing. Yaroslav, like his father, fought against his eldest brother and defeated him; but his brother got the Polish king to help him, came back, more dangerous than ever, and the battle had to be fought and won again.

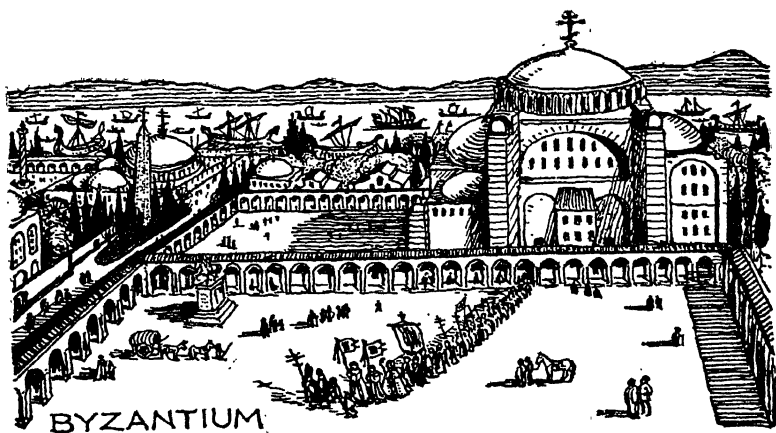
Here is a record of Yaroslav's wars after he became Grand Prince. In 1021 the Poles took Novgorod and he drove them out; in 1022 he fought a Turkish tribe in the southwest; in 1023 he fought another of his brothers who ruled over Chernigov and did not make peace with him until 1026; in 1030 he fought against the Finns in the north; in 1031 he invaded Poland and took from it a province and many prisoners; in 1036 the Pechenegs in vast numbers attacked Kiev and he defeated them so badly that they never troubled the Russians again. (He built St. Sophia in gratitude for this victory.) In 1040 he fought the Lithuanians; in 1043 he sent his son on the last Russian expedition against Byzantium, which failed as all open attacks against the imperial city had failed. This was the usual life of a Grand Prince of Rus, warfare within the country and on all its borders.

The last ten years of Yaroslav's life were peaceful and prosperous. He was known and honored in Europe as a powerful and Christian ruler; since the marriage and baptism of Vladimir the Russian princes had been recognized as the equals of other kings. Yaroslav's sister married the King of Poland; he married his daughters to the kings of Norway, Hungary and France and his son to a princess of Byzantium. The provinces of Rus stretched now from Ladoga to an uncertain border a little south of Kiev, and from the Western Bug River to the junction of the Volga and the Klyazma. These borders are always approximate, for they changed with every renewal of warfare.

All that we know of this history, before the alphabet was brought into Rus, is contained in the old chronicle, which was begun by a monk in Kiev at the close of the eleventh century; and through occasional mentions of the Russians by Byzantine and Arab historians. The monk who painstakingly gathered

together and wrote down all the memories and traditions of his people may not have known the exact truth or quoted the exact words of Olga or Oleg, but there seems to be no reason to doubt the general truth of his story. The Emperor who received Olga wrote about her visit and told about the trading expeditions of the Russian merchants; the Arabs tell about their coming to the shores of the Caspian Sea and even to Baghdad. Before writing was known memory was the only book and it was often a reliable one.

Chroniclers, however, write usually about princes and about the spectacular events in the nation's life; they tell little about the life of the people. So far we can only imagine the lives of the many thousands of people who made up this young nation: the lonely hunters, whose cabins were buried in the deep snow and silence of the forests; the fishermen who launched their little boats each morning from spring to autumn on the slow-moving currents of the rivers; the beekeepers and farmers who lived in villages of clustered log huts; the townspeople, artisans and shopkeepers, slaves and servants, merchants and soldiers, nobles and their ladies. Of all these we shall hear more later.



CHAPTER III

THE QUARRELING PRINCES

The Question of Inheritance

THE PRINCES, NEVERTHELESS, were very important to the welfare of the country. The strength and wisdom of Oleg and Olga, Vladimir and Yaroslav established and civilized the scattered settlements of Rus; the lack of strength and wisdom in its princes did corresponding harm.

As the families of the Grand Princes grew larger, the problem of inheritance led to such complicated difficulties that the whole country was weakened and distraught. Rurik and Igor each apparently had only one son; the son in each case succeeded his father as Grand Prince at Kiev. Vladimir and Yaroslav, however, both came to the throne after the murder or the death in battle of several of their brothers. To avoid this a new arrangement was made when Yaroslav died.

Under this arrangement the government was not in the hands of any one prince but in those of the whole ruling family. The eldest man of the family was the Grand Prince of Kiev. The

other towns, with their provinces, were given to the other members of the family, in the order of their ages and in the order of the importance of the different towns; that is, the next eldest was given the town that was second to Kiev in importance, and so on. (It may be remembered that when the merchant fleets went to Byzantium they went in a certain order: Kiev first, then Chernigov, then Pereyaslav, etc.) When the eldest of the family died, the next eldest, usually a brother or a cousin, succeeded him and all those who were below him in the order of succession moved up one step nearer to the throne of Kiev. The only way to explain this extraordinary system is to give an example of how it worked.

Let us take the sons of Yaroslav, referring to them in the order of their ages rather than by name, for the sake of clarity.

To his eldest son Yaroslav gave both Kiev and Novgorod, for those two great cities lay at either end of the river road. To his second son he gave Chernigov; to the third Pereyaslav; to the fourth Smolensk; to the fifth the town of Vladimir in the province of Volhynia; and to a grandson whose father had died he gave Rostov. The sons took these positions when their father died, in 1054.

In 1057 the fourth son died and the fifth son moved from Vladimir to Smolensk, while the grandson moved up to Vladimir. A few years later the second and third sons drove the eldest out of Kiev; the second son then made himself Grand Prince at Kiev and the third son moved to Chernigov. Three years later the second son died; the third son gave Kiev back to his eldest brother, who ruled there until he died. The third son then took his rightful place at Kiev, while the fifth son moved to Chernigov. The fifth son died before the third; therefore when the third son died the throne of Kiev went to the eldest son of Yaroslav's eldest son, for he was now the eldest member of the family; and the round of inheritance began again.

It is easy to see what complications occurred under this arrangement. Since brothers are closer to each other in age than

fathers are to sons, they followed each other in quick succession; for a younger brother often did not reach Kiev until he was fifty or sixty years old and when he died the son of his eldest brother was already a grown man. The average reign of the twelve princes of Kiev who followed Yaroslav was eight years. This meant that every few years every important town of Rus lost the prince who was ruling over it and was given a new prince who was a stranger to it and knew very little about the affairs of the town or its province. Each prince, in addition to his own household, brought with him a large retinue, his "druzhina," with their households; therefore there was an almost ceaseless moving about of princes and their followers all over the Russian land.

If this system of inheritance had been carried out in an orderly and peaceful way it would have been complicated enough. Needless to say, it was not always peacefully done, and besides, there were things that complicated it still further.

It often happened that the third or fourth son of a family was stronger and more able than the eldest; this was true in the case of both Vladimir and Yaroslav. Unless he was of an obedient and peaceable nature, he was apt to fight his brothers for a better place. Sometimes a man died before his father; in that case, the dead man's sons lost their places in the system entirely, for their uncles would succeed to their grandfather's place and there would be nothing at all for them. They were often sent to some frontier town, or else had to serve some other member of the family. But these "orphan" princes, as they were called, were sometimes ambitious men; if so, they too were apt to fight some of their many uncles or cousins for a province or a city. It was hard, in many cases, to tell which member of the family was the eldest; for, since families were large, an uncle might be younger than his nephew; and yet his place, in the order of succession, might be higher than that of his nephew.

Besides these family difficulties, the towns created others. Since there was such a quick succession of princes, the citizens

of the towns often took matters into their own hands. Sometimes they preferred one prince to another and demanded that he be sent to them; sometimes they liked a prince who had been with them for many years and insisted upon keeping him, refusing to let the new one enter their gates. This was apt to happen in the border provinces where there was danger of invasion from the steppe or from other countries, where a strong leader was important to the people's safety. In Kiev, the citizens preferred the son of Yaroslav's third son to the eldest branch of the family and they had their way, although this break in the order of succession caused a bitter feud between the two branches of the family, between Kiev and Chernigov.

The prince whom they preferred, Vladimir Monomakh, or Monomakh as he is usually called, was one of the finest and wisest of the Grand Princes of Kiev. He did not wish to accept the throne, as he foresaw the trouble that would ensue; but the people insisted, for they loved and respected him and believed that he alone could keep peace in the land. Before he became Grand Prince and afterward, he had tried to unite the other princes by calling them to fight together against a common enemy, to protect their land instead of tearing it to pieces. Yaroslav had driven the Pechenegs away, but a more terrible tribe, the Polovtses, had taken their place and ravaged the territory south of Kiev again and again, burning villages and their crops, carrying the people off into slavery. Three times before he came to the throne, Monomakh had led the Russian armies to splendid victories against these enemies; therefore Kiev, to whose gates the Polovtses had come more than once, prevailed upon him to stay with them and rule them. He was sixty years old when he became Grand Prince; he ruled from 1113 to 1125.

His life was full of conflict and adventure; he left a letter of instructions to his sons when he died, and in it is an interesting account of himself. "I shall tell you, my children," he says, "of my labors in war and in the chase these twelve years. I have made eighty-three long journeys and I do not remember how

many shorter ones. Nineteen times I have made peace with the Polovtses; I have taken one hundred of their princes prisoners and thrown three hundred more of them into the rivers. Near Chernigov I have caught with my own hands ten or twenty wild horses; two buffaloes threw me down; an elk trampled me; a boar tore the sword from my belt and a bear threw down both me and my horse.

"Whatever my servants might have done for me I did myself, by day and by night, in summer heat and winter cold, without rest. I have not depended on my governors or my messengers but have looked after the land myself. I have not let the mighty offend the poor peasants and I have protected the church. Yet do not think that I boast of these deeds; I do but praise God for having preserved me and made me active in good deeds.

"Hasten to do all good things and praise the Lord with His saints. Fear neither death nor war nor wild beast, but do what it behooves you to do wherever God may send you."

When Monomakh died, the people of Kiev kept his sons there as Grand Princes after him and their sons succeeded them. The elder branch of the family, the Princes of Chernigov, fought bitterly for their rightful place, but never regained it permanently. Since both cities were close to the steppe, both sides called the Polovtses in to help them and this made the warfare more terrible. A Russian prince did not hesitate to devastate another Russian town, if it belonged to his enemy; if he took it, he looted it, burned it, and took its people as slaves or even sold them to the Saracens or the Greeks.

And yet, in spite of turmoil and sorrow, this was a time of abundant life and enjoyment. The citizens of the towns and the peasants on the land watched the prince and his druzhina go by with their flying banners, and returned to work. There was wealth in the cities and beauty in the churches; architecture and painting, music and poetry delighted both rich and poor. It was a time of chivalry that was the source of romance and poetry for centuries to come, for the Russians were magnificent

fighters and delighted in battle, whether it were against a neighboring province or a raid out into the steppe.

"The horses neigh," says an old poem, "glory resounds in Kiev; trumpets blare in Novgorod; the standards are raised in Kursk. Igor waits for his beloved brother who sends word to him, saying, 'My only brother, my only light, glorious Igor, saddle your swift horses, for mine are ready! My druzhina are tried warriors, nursed to the sound of the trumpet, cradled in helmets, fed at the point of the spear! The roads are known to them; the ravines are familiar to them; their bows are drawn, their quivers open, their swords are whetted. They race over the steppe like gray wolves, seeking honor for themselves and glory for their prince!'"

Lord Novgorod the Great

THERE WERE aspects of these princely quarrels that made for unity. They were family quarrels: no warrior or noble ever thought of taking the government from the House of Rurik; it was always a descendant of Igor and of Vladimir who was sent to govern a city. Kiev was the center and goal of the family's ambitions; it was the "mother of Russian cities," as Oleg had foretold, and the pattern of Russian culture everywhere. Princes were sent from it to other cities and wherever they went they tried to carry Kiev with them. As Kiev had copied Byzantium, so the other cities copied Kiev, bringing builders and painters from the mother city, modeling their churches and houses after those at Kiev. The churches also depended on the Metropolitan, who was the head of the Church and who sent from Kiev to the other provinces priests and bishops trained in its monasteries. The movement of the princes and their druzhinas from province to province kept one place informed about the others, and spread any knowledge or art or skill that was known, all over the land. There was one culture everywhere, in spite of distance or hostility.

The coming and going of princes made the cities powerful and independent. They could not depend upon a ruler who came to them a stranger, stayed a few years and then left them. The prince at best was their leader in war and their chief executive officer; besides him, they had a governor and a military commander, sometimes appointed by the prince, sometimes elected by themselves. Even before Rurik's time, they had had their own local governments and each town had a popular assembly, called the *vieche*, made up of all the citizens who cared to attend. It was the *vieche* of Kiev which had decided that it wanted Monomakh and his sons to rule them.

The proudest and freest of the cities was Novgorod, which had been in the beginning more important than Kiev — for it was the men of Novgorod, its *vieche*, who had called Rurik to come and rule over them — and which remained strong and free long after Kiev was in ruins. The interests of Kiev lay mainly in the south, for there ran the route to Byzantium, the source of its wealth, its religion and its culture, and there, too, lay its greatest danger, the unceasing attacks of the horsemen of the steppe. Novgorod — although its merchants, too, sent their wares southward — traded largely with the north and west, first with its old friends and kinsmen the Vikings and later with the Germans who had a quarter of their own in Novgorod, with their own church, their warehouses and their dwellings.

Novgorod was built on both sides of the river Volkhov, just north of Lake Ilmen. On the west side stood the Cathedral of St. Sophia, with its six domes, built by Yaroslav's eldest son; in front of it was a great square and near it were the houses of the wealthier merchants and nobles. Crossing the river by the Great Bridge one came to the business section of the city on the east bank, where the markets stood and all the shops and warehouses. Close to the markets there was a square called Yaroslav's Court, for Yaroslav had been governor of Novgorod before he set forth to fight his brother and win the throne of Kiev; the

men of Novgorod had fought with him and he always loved their city. In the center of the square there was a raised platform and on one side there stood a tower (named also after Yaroslav) in which a great bell hung.

When the bell rang, the *vieche* assembled; the prince or the governor mounted the platform to address the people and to present to them any matter to be decided upon. It was discussed freely and then decided by a shout of "yes" or "no." If the shout seemed loud enough, that was the end of the matter; if there was another shout of disagreement, there must be more discussion or, if no agreement could be reached, the meeting often broke up into a fight until one party was driven from the square. The Great Bridge was the scene of many a conflict: the leaders of an obstinate minority were sometimes heaved from it into the river and left to sink or swim; sometimes two *vieches* formed, one on the west or more aristocratic side of the river, the other on the commercial side, and fought out their differences on the Bridge until, perhaps, the bishop and his priests in their splendid robes came out of the cathedral to make peace. The *vieche* was the voice of "Lord Novgorod the Great," as the citizens lovingly called their city, to distinguish it from other Novgorods, or New Towns, that had grown up in other provinces. "Who can stand against God and Great Novgorod?" they asked in their pride.

Around the city on both sides of the river lay suburbs and monasteries, beyond these the lands of nobles, worked by slaves or tenant farmers, and small lands owned by peasants; beyond these stretched the enormous territory that belonged to Lord Novgorod. On the west it reached to Lake Peipus and the Gulf of Finland; on the south it was bounded by the province of Smolensk; but on the north and northeast it spread out like a fan up to the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean and over to the Ural Mountains. Here its hunters and trappers, its pioneers and colonists pushed farther and farther out to harvest a wealth of furs and to mine the precious minerals and salt of the Ural range.

All this belonged, not to Kiev, although Novgorod paid tribute to the Grand Prince, not to Russia, for there was as yet no Russia, but to Novgorod itself.

Lord Novgorod was proud and turbulent; it soon lost patience with the new order of inheritance, for it received six different princes in the fifty years after Yaroslav's death. Therefore, in 1102, when the Grand Prince wished to remove a prince who had been with them for several years, the *vieche* sent envoys to Kiev, saying, "Lord Novgorod has sent us to say this to you: 'We do not want another prince; do not send us one unless he has an extra head, for he will surely lose one. We have our own prince, whom we have brought up to rule Novgorod and we wish to keep him.'"

They had their way, and from that time on the *vieche* chose any prince they wanted and kept him as long as they liked him. If he displeased them, they "showed him the way out," as their chronicle puts it, and found another ruler. They usually gave their reasons. "They showed him the way out," the chronicle says of one prince, "because he cared nothing about the small folk; he cared only for his pleasures, for his dogs and his falcons. In battle he was the first to run away and he did not know his own mind, taking first one side and then another." It is small wonder that the descendants of Rurik did not love the proud city or that one of them said to another, "Do not talk to me of Novgorod! Let it rule itself as best it may and seek whatever prince it desires!"

It did rule itself almost completely; for, even when it kept a prince, he had to sign a charter granting the city its rights and defining his own powers. The *vieche* elected their own governor, their military commander and their archbishop, who appointed the other clergy. One time a prince tried to remove the elected governor. Both he and the governor were summoned to Yaroslav's Court and stood on the platform with the crowd surging around them. "What wrong has the governor done?" cried the citizens. "He has done no wrong," answered the

prince. Whereupon the governor, turning to the crowd, said, "I am glad that I have done no wrong; yet remember, my brothers, that you are free to choose both your governor and your prince." After this warning, the prince said no more and the governor remained.

Nevertheless, the people wanted a prince, just as they did in Rurik's day; for he took no part in the quarrels and factions of the city, but judged the citizens, planned for them and led them in battle. They did not wish to separate themselves from Rurik's House and in one way they were dependent on the southern provinces. Their land was poor; they were surrounded by swamps and forests, and could not raise enough food to feed the people. If they became too free or troublesome, the southern cities, especially Kiev, stopped sending them grain and Lord Novgorod soon had to come to terms.

The city lay close to the 60th degree of latitude; in midsummer there was no night, for even at midnight the sky was a soft deep blue in which only the largest stars shone palely. But in midwinter the sun rose at nine and set at three; the rest of the day must be spent in candle or lamp light. The great bell in Yaroslav's tower often rang through the falling snow, and the citizens, wrapped in furs or sheepskins, assembled in a white square, stamping the snow from their high thick boots, their frosted breath rising like a cloud through the heavy air.

Churches and Monasteries

AROUND NOVGOROD, in its suburbs, stood eighteen monasteries; around Kiev there were fourteen, and others near every large town. More and more churches were built, for every prince wanted to beautify his town and to lavish on the church the wealth that he collected in tribute or made in his trading ventures. There were usually five domes on each church, a large central one and four smaller ones around it. These had at first been shallow, like the Byzantine domes; then they became

helmet-shaped, higher, with pointed tops. In the twelfth century the typically Russian dome, shaped like an onion, began to appear and soon became the most familiar sight in the landscape. Over the flat fields and the low roofs of villages or high above the walls of a city rose the domes, gilded or tiled in blue or green, sometimes sprinkled with gold or silver stars and holding aloft crosses with pendant chains. From belfries and towers the bells, for which Russian workmen were famous, rang out in winter and summer, night and day, calling people to the many services. Inside, the buildings were decorated with paintings, which sometimes covered all the walls, the ceilings and even the pillars. These were done in the Byzantine style, for that was the only painting known in Europe at the time: tall, rather severe figures, with carefully folded drapery.

All that the Russians knew of Christianity came to them from Byzantium; it was natural, therefore, that the Russian Church depended on the Byzantine Church as a child does on its mother. This dependence had one serious consequence that had a lasting and harmful effect upon the whole life of the Russian nation.

Originally there was only one Christian Church, whose leaders were the bishops of Rome, Alexandria in Egypt, Antioch in Syria, Jerusalem and Byzantium. The bishop of Rome was called the Pope while the other four were known as Patriarchs. Delegates from these five centers met in Councils to decide on important questions of belief or on anything that affected all the churches. Long before Vladimir I had been baptized, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem had fallen before the Saracens, who were Moslems. Rome, too, had fallen before the Gothic barbarians, but the Church had converted all of them to Christianity, so that the Pope was now the head of the Church throughout Europe. Rome and Byzantium were the two powerful centers of Christian thought.

Rome was by far the older of the two cities and had been the first capital of the Roman Empire; but Byzantium was the first

Christian capital, for it was built by Constantine I, who made it his capital and who made Christianity the religion of the empire. The church in Rome had been founded by St. Peter, to whom Christ said, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church." * Therefore the Pope held that he, as head of the Roman Church, was the head of all the Christian churches in the world; but the Byzantines held that Popes and Patriarchs were equals. The Popes looked toward the West, to the young European nations who needed their guidance; the Patriarchs looked to the East where the Moslems were pressing hard against all the borders of Christendom, and to the churches in Russia, Syria and Egypt which needed their help. These circumstances separated the Eastern and the Western churches from each other.

There were religious differences too: a word in the Creed; whether priests should or should not marry; whether leavened or unleavened bread should be used in the Communion service. But these were not the real root of the matter. The pride, the interests and the positions of the two churches were too different to allow them to agree for long. There were quarrels and controversies for centuries; finally, in the very year of Yaroslav's death, 1054, the final break came. The two churches separated, never to meet again in Council, never to enter each other's doors or to worship God together.

This separation, the Great Schism, as it is called, divided the Russians for centuries from the people of western Europe. The Russian Church, whose Metropolitan was appointed by the Patriarch in Byzantium, naturally remained with the Eastern Church. This is called the Orthodox, or the Eastern Orthodox Church; orthodox being a Greek word which means right opinion, or true faith. Its members believed that they alone were true Christians, guardians of the true faith. The Western Church, which is called the Roman Catholic, believed the same thing and the two could not be reconciled, although there were several

* *This is a play on words, for in Latin Peter is Petrus and rock is petra.*

attempts to unite them again. Religion was all-important in those days; nothing created more bitterness than a difference in belief. The friendly relations that had begun in Vladimir I's reign between the Russians and the western Europeans cooled; centuries of warfare, misunderstanding and isolation were the results of the Great Schism.

The first monks who came to Rus in Vladimir's time came, of course, from the Eastern Empire and brought with them a kind of monasticism which belonged to that part of the world. The Byzantine Empire was highly civilized and sophisticated; therefore when a man wanted to live a religious life, the first thing that he did was to leave the temptations and luxuries of civilization and go to some place where he could live simply and give his whole mind to God. Many men went into the deserts of Syria and Egypt or lived in caves in the mountains of Greece. In that way monasticism began, for the very word means "living alone." As their numbers increased, some of the monks built their huts near each other and met to worship God together; finally they lived together in monasteries; but even there the purpose of their lives was to live apart, as if "only God and myself existed in this world," as one monk said. "The man who has learned by experience," another wrote, "the sweetness of the quietness of his cell will flee from his neighbor, not because he despises him, but because of the fruits he plucks from silence." Life was very strict in the monasteries: there was only one meal a day and no animal food was eaten, not even milk or eggs; there were frequent fasts; the night's sleep was always broken by worship or prayer; the monks did all the work of the monasteries. Silence, humility, poverty, obedience and chastity were their virtues; for only by mastering the body, they believed, could the soul be freed.

Vladimir's Rus was neither civilized nor sophisticated; its people needed every sort of education and guidance. It was, perhaps, unfortunate that the monasticism of the East, which took men so completely out of the world, should have come

there. In western Europe the monasteries were centers of learning and education, but in the East learning was considered one of the temptations of the world and the monk who read too eagerly was thought to be in the clutches of an evil spirit. Education was given only to those who might enter the church or who held high positions in the state; and even in the church, knowledge was limited, for all the church services were held in the Slavonic language and the priests did not need to know Latin, as they did in the West, or even Greek, which was the language of Byzantium.

Nevertheless, the monastic life attracted many people, as it always does in turbulent times. People took refuge in the cloisters; when they grew old they entered a monastery to die in peace. In the monasteries the clergy were trained; there the first chronicles were written, books were copied and painters carefully made the holy icons that were wanted for every household as well as every church throughout the land. The buildings increased; the monasteries looked like fortified towns, their towered walls and high gates enclosing churches and chapels, dwellings and workrooms, storerooms and barns.

In the churches of the villages and the cities the people found beauty and drama, for the lives of Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Apostles and the great Saints were followed and celebrated throughout the year. The four great festivals were Christmas, Easter, the Feast of the Apostles at the end of June, and the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in August. Each of these was preceded by weeks of fasting and followed by great rejoicing; and there were many lesser festivals. But among them all, Easter was the greatest, the most joyful day of the year.

Before midnight on Saturday all the people assembled in the churches with lighted candles in their hands. At midnight the priest came out from the central door in the altar screen and led the people, with their lighted candles, out of the church and around it back to the entrance door, which they found closed. This symbolized the stone set against the tomb of Christ. Then

the door was opened; the people entered; the triumphant singing of the choir announced that Christ had risen from his tomb; the priests came forward and greeted all the people, telling them the glad news, and everyone turned to his neighbor and kissed him, saying, "Christ is risen!" and receiving the answer, "He is risen indeed!" Then, when the crowds had poured out of the churches back into their palaces or their huts, feasts and rejoicing filled the days, and the quick spring came, breaking the ice and melting the snow, bringing back the birds and the first green blades of grass.



CHAPTER IV

THE DECLINE OF KIEV

The Borders of the Russian Land

IT WILL BE well at this time to look at the world in which the Russian people were living and to find out what nations and peoples were their neighbors.

While Monomakh, his sons and his grandsons were Grand Princes in Kiev, Rus was at the height of its power and extent. Its provinces stretched from the Carpathian Mountains and the Western Bug River to the Ural Mountains, from the Vorskla River to the Arctic Ocean. North and northeast were the Finnish people, who were less civilized than the Slavs, and gentle; they mingled peacefully with the Slavs and were absorbed into the Russian provinces. West of Novgorod, along the shores of the Baltic Sea, were the Estonians, who were also Finnish people, and the Letts and Lithuanians who were Indo-European, like the Slavs. The Russians of Novgorod collected tribute from these tribes but never pushed much farther west than Lake Peipus

and never established themselves on the shores of the Baltic Sea. The land was poor, thickly forested, and strewn with lakes and swamps; the people were savage and warlike and still held to their pagan worship of the powers of nature.

During the twelfth century German merchants traded with Novgorod and with the Swedish market town of Visby on the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea. They passed close to the eastern shores of that sea, saw that good harbors were there and knew that the people were uncivilized and pagan. Priests came with the merchants; a monk converted one Baltic tribe to Christianity. He built a church and a fortress, and the people soon saw that he meant to rule over them. They rose up, drove the priests out and plunged into the Dvina River to wash off their baptism. "Be off from us!" they said, watching the water flow toward the sea. "Go back where you came from!"

The Pope declared war against them. He sent a German bishop with a war fleet of twenty-three ships to the mouth of the Dvina; the German warriors easily defeated the rebels and forced them to become Christians again. An organization of crusading knights was formed, known as the "Knights of the Sword" and they took possession of the Baltic coast from Danzig to Narva, building towns and seaports, occupying the land and enslaving the people.

"The priests strangled us with their rosaries," says one of the sad songs of that region; "the greedy knights plundered us, troops of brigands ravaged us, armed murderers cut us in pieces. The fathers of the cross stole our riches, stole the treasure from the hiding place, attacked the sacred tree and polluted the holy waters."

This happened in the early thirteenth century; the Knights became close neighbors of Novgorod and Pskov.

South of the Dvina, bordering the Russian province of Polotsk, were the wild and swampy forests where the Lithuanians had fled to protect themselves from the German Knights. They

t their freedom and their old religion; in the early thirteenth century they were uncivilized and harmless neighbors.

Further west and south, bordering on the Russian provinces Volhynia and Galicia, was the kingdom of Poland. The Poles were Slavs; their country was divided into many principalities just as the Russian land was. Poles and Russians often fought along the borders; on the other hand, they often fought side by side against a common enemy, often helped each other in local quarrels and intermarried. They were, unfortunately, divided by the Great Schism; for the Poles were Roman Catholics; and as time went on, this disagreement in religion made the feeling between two peoples who were otherwise much alike.

South of Poland, separated from Russian Galicia by the Carpathian Mountains, was the powerful kingdom of Hungary. The Hungarian people were Magyars by race, neither Slavs nor West-Europeans. They were related to the Finns and had moved from western Asia in the early centuries A.D.*

These were the countries and people that bordered directly the western Russian provinces. Beyond them, still farther west, were the growing kingdoms of Europe; south of Hungary was Bulgaria and south of that the Byzantine Empire, which was waging in Asia Minor, year after year, a losing war against the Turks.

This was a time when Europe was being threatened by Asia, when the Christian states were fighting for their lives and their faith against the Moslems. The Huns, who had terrified Europe in the fifth century, were forerunners of more dangerous and more sweeping invasions. In the seventh and eighth centuries the Arabs swept across northern Africa and into Spain, where they built up a beautiful civilization that lasted for seven hundred years. The Turks, moving slowly out of central Asia, had taken possession of Asia Minor from the Byzantines by the end of the tenth century and had conquered also Syria, Palestine and

Mesopotamia from the Arabs. They were not yet threatening Europe, but they had taken the holy places of Christianity in Palestine. When pilgrims went there from Europe they did not like to find the tomb and birthplace of Christ in the hands of unbelievers; the more far-sighted of them noticed, too, how narrow were the straits that separated Asia Minor from Europe.

At the end of the eleventh century the Christian Church in Rome called for war against the Moslems; and for two hundred years the fighting men of Europe poured by sea and by land into Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine to fight against the Turks for the possession of the holy places. They called these wars the Crusades, or wars of the Cross, for these were holy wars to them, at least to start with. Later on, as they saw the greater civilization and the wealth of the East and of Byzantium and realized that a great deal of that wealth could be brought into their own pockets through trade, they forgot their first purpose.

On the Fourth Crusade, in 1204, the French and Italian leaders so far forgot this purpose that they attacked Byzantium, which was weak and divided by a quarrel in the imperial family. For the first time in its history the great city fell before its enemies. The French and Italians entered it and looted it as if it had been a Moslem city; for the Great Schism between the Churches made them feel that it was hardly Christian. They entered St. Sophia and broke down the silver altar screen, smashing it to pieces to pick out its jewels and melt down its metal. They sacked the sanctuary, breaking up the gold and jeweled Communion table and stealing the treasure of gold and silver, the robes and jewels that had been given to the beloved shrine.

For sixty years a French dynasty ruled in Byzantium and the Venetian merchants took away its trade, carrying the Eastern goods directly to Venice and distributing them from there to the rest of Europe. Venice became rich and brilliant, beautified by the spoils of Byzantium, which never recovered its former glory, although it did regain its freedom.

The splendid fighting forces of the Russians, with their

warrior princes who were "nursed to the sound of trumpets, cradled in helmets, and fed at the point of a spear," took no part in these wars. The Crusades were sent out by the Popes in Rome, who did not consider that the Russians belonged to the Christian Church; nor would the Russians have obeyed a summons from the Pope. But there was another more compelling reason: the Russians, from the very beginning of their history, had been waging an unceasing war against the invasions of Asia; their whole strength was needed, during the time of the Crusades, to fight off the ever-increasing attacks of the Polovtses.

The crusaders of western Europe fought against the Arabs, the Saracens and the Turks, who had taken over the ancient civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean lands and had become more civilized than the Europeans, whose countries were still young. The Russians, on the other hand, dealt with the wandering tribes of the steppe, who remained uncivilized and savage and were nearly impossible to defeat because they had no fixed homes or countries which could be attacked and conquered. They were as hard to seize and hold as wind or water.

The central part of the great continent of Asia and Europe (which we must always think of as one in considering the history of Russia) is far from any ocean; therefore, as we have seen, it gets little rain and its climate is harsh, very cold in winter and very hot in summer.

In central Asia the land was not fertile enough for farming but there were vast plains and hillsides that were good for grazing; so the people who lived there were herdsmen. They lived on the flesh and milk of their cattle and sheep; they built their tents of woolen felt and dressed in wool and leather; they traveled entirely on horseback or in carts, and moved constantly with their flocks from one pasture to another, going north in summer and south in winter. The climate made them hardy; the difficulty of their lives made them cruel and crafty; their pleasures were hunting and fighting.

Their flocks gave them all that they actually needed to live on, but if they wanted more comfort, wealth or beauty, they had to find it in the civilized countries around the edges of the continent, most of which grew up along the great rivers that ran into all the seas. The history of every country of Asia is filled, therefore, with the invasions of these wandering horsemen. There were many tribes, with many names; for convenience they are often called "Tartars." They were driven out of China again and again and yet they conquered it twice. They could not reach southeastern Asia. India, with its splendid landward defense, the Himalayas, could be reached only by one passage in the northwest and yet India, too, was invaded and conquered by these nomads. But the way into the west, though it was the longest, was the easiest for them: a broad path of open steppe, an ocean of grass, a paradise for their horses and their flocks, beckoned to them and invited them; and horde after horde of nomad peoples came out of Asia and broke against the borders of eastern Europe.

The Russians, of course, were the first to be attacked, since they were closest to Asia. They lived in the forests north, but only just north, of the wide grassy highway of the steppe, and as they cleared more land they opened the way for further attack. The Tartars did not like forests, rivers or swamps, for they could take their flocks, their carts and their tents only over the open, pathless steppe. But when the rivers were frozen they could ride on the ice; when the land was cleared they could invade it. Worse still, the Russian cities depended on foreign trade for their living; their southern trade routes along the Dnieper and the Volga passed through hundreds of miles of steppe and the merchant fleets were always in danger of attack from one tribe or another of the nomad horsemen.

As the Russians grew more civilized and increased in numbers, so the tribes of horsemen in central Asia increased in numbers and strength. The Polovtses were stronger than the Pechenegs; the southern trade routes became so dangerous dur-

ing the twelfth century that merchants began to abandon them.

Kiev itself, the mother of Russian cities, was in mortal danger and there was no one to defend it; for, while the danger from the steppe was moving closer and closer, the Russian princes went on fighting each other, and, since Kiev was their goal, it suffered most from their battles. Therefore many people, farmers, merchants and nobles, began to leave that part of the country and to go westward into Galicia or north into the provinces of Smolensk and Suzdal.

Prince Andrei of Vladimir

AT THE end of the twelfth century a new kind of prince appeared in the province of Suzdal, which lay far from Kiev in the northeastern forests, between the upper reaches of the Volga and its tributary river, the Oka.

Suzdal was a distant, undeveloped province; it was given to one of Monomakh's younger sons, Yuri (or George) Dolgoruki, which means Long-Arm. Yuri gave his baby son Andrei the little town of Vladimir on the Klyazma River and there Andrei grew up, in the care of some of his father's boyars, until he was able to rule the town and its district himself. He grew fond of Vladimir and wanted to stay there, having no desire to join the family quarrels or to move to any finer city.

His father Yuri fought all his life for the throne of Kiev, first against his cousins of Chernigov and then against his nephew who had disregarded the order of inheritance and had seized Kiev for himself. Andrei fought well and bravely for his father but he hated the long feud. Battles raged from Kiev to Novgorod, from Galich to Rostov between cousins and brothers, uncles and nephews. Both sides invited neighboring countries to fight for them: in Galicia the Poles or Hungarians were called upon for help; in Novgorod the Lithuanians; while in the south and east, bands of the dreaded Polovtses were hired by one prince or another, or invited in to ravage Russian villages and towns,

which they did gladly, trampling down the grain, setting houses and barns aflame, kidnapping women and children. In 1151, when Yuri had been defeated, Andrei begged of him, "There is nothing more for us here, my father. Come, let us return home before the river is frozen over. Behold, the princes fight while our enemies devour the land."

His father would not give up, however, and finally won the throne of Kiev two years before he died. He sent Andrei, whom he loved and trusted, to rule Vyshgorod, a fortified city south of Kiev. But Andrei was tired of fighting and did not like the south. "Being grieved in his heart," says the old chronicle, "Prince Andrei spoke no word to his father but returned secretly to his own country of Suzdal where there was greater peace." He took from the church of Vyshgorod a very sacred icon of the Virgin Mary which had been sent to Yuri from Byzantium; with this and his followers he returned to his beloved Vladimir.

He never left Vladimir again, even when he became Grand Prince on his father's death in 1157. Perhaps he realized that Kiev could no longer hold the first place among Russian cities; perhaps he was wise enough to know that Suzdal was the very heart of the land; perhaps he just loved his home; perhaps he felt that the moving and fighting and changing of rulers must stop, that there must be one strong ruler living in one place. Who can tell what was in his mind? He brought builders and artists and workmen to Vladimir and built a beautiful city with strong walls and a Golden Gate, copying Kiev which had copied Byzantium. He brought a fine white stone all the way from the Ural Mountains down the Kama River on barges into the Volga, then up the Volga and up the Klyazma to Vladimir; and with that he built more beautiful churches than those of Kiev. In one of them he put the icon of the "Wonder-working Mother of God, of the golden locks." Near the city he built for himself a village and a house and an exquisite church which still stands on the bank of the little river Nerl. He called the place Bogoliubovo, which means "the love of God."

He kept the power in his own hands when he became Grand Prince. In his new city of Vladimir there was no *vieche*; at his court there were no powerful boyars; he had no fights with his brothers, for he banished them from the country and they took refuge in Byzantium. But he treated the "small folk" kindly and cared for them and they always supported him. "We love this grandson of Monomakh," they said. "He never rests from his labor; he keeps his mind and conscience clear. He has love for God and man; he is good to the weak and the ailing."

He would have liked to hold the whole Russian land in his hands just as he held his own province, but the other princes were too strong to permit it. He had allowed a young cousin of his to rule Kiev, but when that prince did not "walk in his will" Andrei sent an army against Kiev and took it. His boyars and soldiers sacked the city as if it had been in a foreign land; they looted the churches and robbed them of their icons, robes and jewels. This was a sad blow for Kiev and a proof that Vladimir was now the capital. Andrei tried to bring Smolensk and Novgorod under his control, but his armies were defeated. He would have liked to be a prince like Vladimir or Yaroslav, who sent their sons or captains to govern all the provinces. It was too late to unite the vast, divided land under that sort of rule; it was too early to impose another sort.

Andrei was a lonely man, ruthless in his ways, abrupt in speech, and autocratic. The great folk did not love him as the small folk did, for he took power from them. In 1174, as he slept in his house in Bogoliubovo, assassins crept in fearfully and murdered him, though he fought hard for his life. He was called Andrei Bogoliubsky after the place that he loved: "Andrew of the Love of God."

At that time Russians did not have any surnames. A man was called sometimes by a name like "Long-Arm" or "Monomakh," but these were not surnames and were not borne by their sons. A man was called by his given name and a second name made up of his father's name and the suffix "vich" which means "son":

for example, "Andrei Yurievich" meant "Andrew, the son of George"; "Yuri Vladimirovich" meant "George the son of Vladimir." Women's names were made in the same way, except that "vna" was added instead of "vich": "Nastasia Yurievna," for example, or "Avdotya Vladimirovna." That form of address has always been used in Russia and is still used at the present day, except by friends and relatives, who use the first name or, more often, nicknames. There was never any title, like "Mr." or "Lord" so-and-so; even nobles and princes were called by their first names and the patronymic, as the second name is called.

When Andrei died, there were a few years of civil war; this time it was between cities rather than princes, for older cities in Suzdal were jealous of the young upstart, Vladimir. One of Andrei's younger brothers won, however, and reigned in Vladimir for thirty-six years, from 1176 to 1212. He was called Big Nest, because he had such a large family; he followed in Andrei's footsteps and made Vladimir the center of the Russian land.

The men who made this new region the center were wise and far-sighted. Suzdal lay between the upper Volga and the Oka; the two rivers embraced the province as if they were protecting arms. Two or three hundred miles to the east, the Kama River, with its wide-spreading tributaries, connected Suzdal with the Ural Mountains and the eastern steppe. And yet, because of the amazing river system of the Russian plain, Suzdal was connected on the west with the Dnieper, with the Lovat which led to Novgorod, and with the Dvina which ran to the Baltic Sea. It was also a meeting place of land roads leading from north to south and from east to west. Dense forest surrounded it and people came to it for protection now just as they had come, centuries before, to the forests for protection.

The gold and green domes of Kiev still rose proudly against the sky; its markets were still crowded; priests and bishops were sent from its monasteries to the other cities, but more and more

workmen left Kiev and Pereyaslavl and Chernigov and journeyed up the rivers and along the roads to build new towns in Suzdal. Peasants from the southern provinces left their burned villages and drove their few pigs and cattle up into the northern forests. All along the roads and rivers, westward into Galicia, northward into Smolensk, north and eastward into Suzdal, steady streams of people moved slowly and painfully to find new homes.

The Rus of Kiev, active in foreign trade, rich with Byzantine silks and jewels, was coming to an end; a new state, depending on farms cleared out of the forests, and a more difficult, isolated life, were beginning.

The People's Songs

THE PEOPLE who left the southern provinces carried into their new homes precious memories of a time and a way of living that was soon to disappear forever. In their songs they remembered the glorious days of Kiev, the bravery of its warriors, the beauty and the bravery, too, of its ladies, its unceasing warfare with the Tartars, its adventures and its feasts. Most of these songs were about Vladimir I and his court; he and his družina were to the Russians what King Arthur and his Round Table were to the English, what Charlemagne and his Paladins were to the French.

There was much time for songs and storytelling in the Russian land: in the long, cold winters the farmer and the fisherman could do very little work; there was so little daylight that any sort of handwork was difficult. The people gathered gratefully around a storyteller or a bard; in the villages they met in one of the larger cabins and listened for hours to tales or songs. When the women met to spin or weave, to embroider or make lace, one of them would entertain the rest with stories; hunters meeting together in the deep forests would while away the time with songs. The Russians are sociable people; their lives were often

lonely from necessity but they loved nothing better than to meet together, to eat and drink, to dance and to listen to the chanted tales of long ago. These were called "bylinas" which means "stories of what has been."

The hero of these songs is not the Vladimir of history; he is "courteous Prince Vladimir, the Fair Sun," who does little but give feasts in his palace in royal Kiev town for his boyars (the great nobles), his mighty warriors, for merchants and strangers, who sat carving the white swan and quaffing sweet mead far into the night.

At his table sat young Dobrynya Nikitich, at whose birth the waters of the Dnieper were troubled, the young birches fell down and the wild beasts fled far away. He slew dragons and witches and rode forth on many a quest and adventure for his courteous lord. Beside him sat Alyosha, the priest's son, a brave but mischievous fellow whom none could trust, for he had greedy eyes and itching fingers. There, too, was Churilo Plenkovich the Dandy, at whose beauty everyone marveled. He was dressed in green samite with carved buttons of gold and a surcoat of scarlet; the arch of his green morocco shoe was so high that a bird might have flown under it; on his yellow curls was a cap with a golden crown and on his shoulders a mantle of sable. Even the nuns in their cells turned to look after him, as he walked through the streets.

Quiet Dunai Ivanovich was for a time one of this famous druzhina. Before he came to Kiev he had served the King of Lithuania and had fallen in love with the Princess Nastasya. Vladimir sent him to that country once and, as he rode back over the glorious, far-reaching plain, he saw a Tartar pursuing him. He turned and, after a desperate fight, threw the Tartar down and drew his sharp knife to kill him. Only then did he see that the Tartar was the Princess Nastasya. He raised her from the damp earth, kissed her sweet mouth, took her back to Kiev and married her. They were happy for three years, until Nastasya beat him one day in an archery match; then in anger he turned his

bow against her and sent his burning arrow into her white breast. Afterward he was overcome with remorse and killed himself with his knife. Nastasya was not the only warrior maid who rode forth to battle and proved herself the equal or superior, in wit and strength, of men.

These and many others — Ivan Godinovich, Vladimir's nephew, Mikhailo the Rover, Diuk Stepanovich from India the Rich — feasted with Vladimir and fought for him. The best-loved of them all was Ilya of Murom, the Old Cossack. Murom was in Suzdal, on the Oka River.

Ilya was a peasant's son, so strong that he could hew down in an hour the trees that his father, with all his laborers, could not have felled in three days. He wanted to give his strength, however, to defend the Holy Orthodox Church and to fight against the unbelieving Tartars; therefore one day, with his father's blessing, he saddled good Cloudfall, his shaggy bay horse, and prepared for his journey to royal Kiev town, to the worshipful feast of the Fair Sun, Prince Vladimir.

"Good Cloudfall's mane was three ells in length," the bards sang in their rhythmic chant, "his tail three fathoms and his hair of three colors. Ilya put on him first the plaited bridle, next twelve saddlecloths, twelve felts, and upon them a metal-bound Circassian saddle. The silken girths were twelve in number — not for youthful vanity, but for heroic strength; the stirrups were of damascened steel from beyond the seas, the buckles of bronze that rusts not and wears not, the silk from Samarkand, which wears not and tears not.

"They saw the good youth as he mounted, but as he rode they saw him not, so swift was his flight; there seemed but a smoke wreath on the open plain, as when wild winds of winter whirl the snow about. Good Cloudfall skimmed over the grass and above the waters; high over the standing trees he soared, the damp, primeval oaks, yet lower than the drifting clouds. . . . Little rivers and lakes dropped between his feet; where his hoofs fell, springs of water gushed forth . . . at each leap he

covered a mile. On the steppe, Ilya hewed down a grove of trees and raised a goodly cross, whereon he wrote: 'Ilya of Murom rides to royal Kiev town on his first heroic quest.'

"When he drew near to Chernigov, there stood a great host of Tartars — three sons of khans, each with forty thousand men. The cloud of steam from their horses was so great that the fair red sun could not be seen by day, nor the bright moon by night. The gray hare could not run nor the swift falcon fly around that host, so vast it was." *

Plucking up an oak in each hand, Ilya slew the whole host and freed Chernigov; between that town and Kiev he captured a dangerous robber and bound him to his stirrup. And so he entered the service of courteous Prince Vladimir, where he received gifts and honor.

This wonderful druzhina had innumerable fights and adventures, which can be read in other books, for there is no space for them here. Yet one more must be told.

One time thirteen of these great heroes rode out against a Tartar horde. For five hours they mowed down young and old and left not a single soul to continue the race. When they met together again, they boasted and said, "Behold, we have slain a horde, yet we are neither wounded nor weary. If there were a ladder to heaven, we could climb it and destroy even the heavenly host!" As they said this, they saw a new host come against them. They began to slay these, but whenever they killed one man, two more appeared; when they slew those two, there were still four. Then they realized that the heavenly host had accepted their challenge; their hearts were smitten with dread; they turned and fled into the mountains and there they lay down and were turned to stone.

So ended this heroic race which, the people believed, could be vanquished only by the angels. But the names of Vladimir and his knights were not forgotten; for hundreds of years their stories were told over and over again; and the wealth of Kiev,

* "*Epic Songs of Russia*" by Isabel F. Hapgood. Charles Scribner's Sons.

the trade with Eastern lands were remembered even when people had forgotten where those lands were. Even now, in the lonely parts of the north, in distant places in Siberia, men and women sing these ancient songs.



CHAPTER V

THE TARTAR YOKE

Jenghis Khan

WHILE THIS SHIFT of population was going on, the worst invasion that the civilized people of Europe and Asia had ever suffered burst like a tempest out of the center of that great continent.

In the northern part of Mongolia, between the Onon and the Kerulon rivers, there was a small tribe of nomad horsemen who gave its name to their part of the world, for they were called Mongols, though they are known in Russia as Tartars. They seemed like any other nomad herdsman, but in the late twelfth century they produced a man who became one of the most powerful and dangerous leaders the world has ever seen. He is known as Jenghis Khan, which means "Very Mighty Lord."

He started his career when he was an orphaned boy of thirteen, pursued by enemies who wanted to take from him even the small inheritance of flocks and followers that his father had left him; when he died, he had conquered more of the earth's

surface and killed more people than any one man has ever done before or since. The Second World War is the only event that can compare in devastation and sorrow with the conquests of Jenghis Khan. He combined in himself all the strong qualities of the nomad—the strength and endurance, the craft and cruelty, the swiftness and ruthlessness in warfare. But he added a quality of his own, rare in most nomads: he was a magnificent organizer, both in a military and a political way.

When he was fifteen he escaped from the enemies who meant to put him to death, rallied his father's followers around him and fought his way to the leadership of his whole tribe. Men were loyal to him because he was strong and because he never forgot an enemy or a friend. He pursued his enemies until they were dead; he trusted and generously rewarded his friends and loyal followers. He demanded absolute obedience and got it because disobedience was punished with immediate death. Before long, in 1206, he had either won over or conquered all the wandering tribes of Mongolia; he was made the Great Khan, or ruler over them all, and received his title of Jenghis then.

When he had thousands of men under his command, he organized them in a very clever way; it had been used before but never so well as by him. He divided the men into groups of ten, who chose one of themselves to be their leader. Ten of these groups formed a group of a hundred men; the ten leaders chose one of themselves, who was then responsible for the hundred; ten leaders of hundreds chose one who was then responsible for a thousand; ten leaders of thousands chose a general who headed ten thousand men. Thus, every leader commanded only nine men: the general of ten thousand commanded only the nine other leaders of thousands and so on down the line to the leader of ten who commanded the other nine men of his group. If any of those ten were taken prisoner in battle, the others were killed by their superior officers; if a man fled from battle, he was killed by his own men. Nothing was less important to Jenghis Khan than human life.

Each soldier — and every Tartar was a soldier — carried two bows and several quivers of arrows, a rope, an axe, a file to sharpen his arrowheads, a needle and thread and a leather pouch for food. Some carried swords and wore armor made of thin plates of iron sewed on leather, but most wore armor of hard leather. Each man had from two to twenty extra horses that ran beside him; when one was tired he turned it loose and mounted another. The horses were as hardy as the men; sturdy, shaggy little creatures that had never known a stable; they huddled together out-of-doors during the freezing winter nights, they ate the standing grass or pawed the snow aside with their hoofs and ate the frozen grass or moss beneath. The army's food supply trotted beside it in the form of flocks of sheep, cattle and horses. The Mongols ate sparingly; their favorite drink was mares' milk; they could travel and fight for days on the dried milk and meat that they carried in their leather pouches.

They were not pleasant people; they had broad cheeks, small eyes, small flat noses and swarthy skins. They were very dirty and it was against their religion to wash their clothes. The women smeared their faces with black grease to protect them against the bitter winds of the steppe.

These were the people whom Jenghis Khan led out in 1207 to conquer the world. His army of hundreds of thousands of these fierce fighters was led by himself, his nine great orloks, or generals, and his four sons who were all great warriors.

He first attacked northern China and in a few years had conquered everything north of the Yellow River. The Tartars went into China horsemen and bowmen; they came out engineers and artillerymen. The Chinese used catapults and balistas, which threw stones, iron balls and explosives; they also used battering rams and other engines of war, without which walled cities could not be taken. With these and the wealth of northern China Jenghis Khan returned and moved toward the West.

Between the high mountains of central Asia and the Caspian Sea, in what is still called Turkestan, there were several Turkish

kingdoms that had grown rich on the trade between the East and the West; for the great caravan routes that brought tea and silk and jade from China ran through their cities. These cities, whose strong walls enclosed busy markets, mosques, colleges, and pleasant homes whose gardens were filled with roses and many other flowers, were surrounded by orchards watered by careful irrigation, for water was scarce in those regions. In 1219 Jenghis Khan turned his hordes of men and animals into those kingdoms and in less than ten years he had destroyed them.

He always warned people that he was coming; he sent messengers to say, "God has given me the empire of the earth, from the east to the west. Whoever submits to me shall be spared but if you resist — God only knows what will happen." What always happened was that everything fell before the numbers and the weapons of the Tartars. On his way across Asia Jenghis had picked up innumerable small tribes of nomad people and joined them to his army which numbered at least half a million men. All of them were fighters, whereas in civilized countries there were many men who did not know how to fight. The Tartars fought in relays, day and night, without stopping; the Turks, who had no one to replace them, fought desperately and heroically until they dropped. Then the Tartars, whose machines had been battering the walls and gates night and day, broke into the city or the fortress, like a flood breaking down a dam.

Everything they did was carefully organized. When they took a city they drove all the people out of the gates into the open. Then they looted the city to their hearts' content, torturing any rich citizens who might have hidden their treasure. Then they assembled the people and divided them into groups. They kept the young and strong, both men and women, to be their slaves; they kept skilled workmen to labor for them; the rest, young and old, they slaughtered where they stood and left their bodies lying on the ground. Then they burned the city and

moved on to the next one. They hated cities and walls, which stood in their way and broke up their pasturage. Sometimes they laid the careful labor of men so low that they plowed it over and sowed grain in the place where the city had stood. These were the people who were moving closer and closer to the Russian borders.

While Jenghis Khan was conquering Turkestan, the sultan of one of these kingdoms fled for his life toward the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea. Jenghis, who never left an enemy alive, sent two of his orloks to pursue him. They drove the sultan to his death and then, from sheer exuberance of strength, rode around the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, defeating everyone whom they met, and so appeared on the steppe where the Polovtses had wandered unchallenged for hundreds of years.

After one battle the Polovtses knew that they had met their masters. They fled westward over the steppe as fast as they could with their herds, their women and children traveling in the round felt tents lifted bodily on to wide wagons. They stopped at the Dnieper; then their leaders went to the Prince of Kiev and prostrated themselves before him; when they raised their heads, the prince looked into terrified eyes. "New and strange enemies have come against us," they said. "They have seized our country; tomorrow they will take yours if you do not help us."

The Prince of Kiev sent messengers to the princes of the other southern provinces — Galicia, Smolensk and Volhynia. They met in Kiev, and while they were planning together, ambassadors came from the Tartars. Their small, wild eyes looked out from under fine Turkish helmets; they wore jeweled ornaments and rich mantles taken from Turkish cities. "We understand," they said through interpreters, "that you are listening to our slaves the Polovtses. We have done nothing against you; we only intend to punish these slaves of ours. Therefore side with us

and share their land with us, for these men have always been your enemies." The Russian princes very foolishly killed these envoys. The Tartars sent others who said, "You have listened to our enemies and slain our envoys. Very well, since you wish for war you shall have it. God will decide our quarrel."

The princes assembled over eighty thousand men, crossed the Dnieper and rode for nine days over the steppe, guided by the Polovtses. They met the Tartars near the Kalka, a little river that flows into the Sea of Azov. The Polovtses, encouraged by the help they had received, led the attack; but as soon as they met their terrible enemies they broke and fled through the Russian lines, throwing everything into disorder. The Russians fought splendidly but were driven back and pursued by the Tartars. Six princes, seventy great boyars, tens of thousands of soldiers lay dead on the field. The Prince of Kiev and two others would not leave the Kalka but entrenched themselves on a small hill and fought for three days. The Tartars promised them their freedom if they would pay a ransom, so they yielded. The Tartars promptly killed all their followers, bound the three princes and laid them on the ground. Then they put planks across their bodies and sat, drinking and feasting, on this platform while the princes died slowly beneath them. This was in 1224.

The Tartar army swept northward, raiding the rich city of the Bulgars on the Volga, and then vanished into the east, laden with booty, to join the rest of Jenghis' army. They did not appear again on the western steppe for thirteen years. The memory of them was like a nightmare; no one knew who they were or where they had gone. The Russian princes started quarreling and fighting again; but the Polovtses, who were wiser, moved farther and farther west, finally begging permission to enter Hungary, which they were allowed to do when they agreed to become Christians.

The reason for the Tartars' disappearance was simple. Jenghis Khan died soon after his two orloks returned from their trip

around the Caspian, and his empire, which stretched from the Volga to the China Sea, must be provided for. His second son succeeded him as Great Khan, for the eldest son had died before his father; the empire was divided between the three living sons and the son of the eldest. This man's name was Batu and he fell heir to the west. Then a great assembly was held in Mongolia in 1235, attended by all the members of Jenghis' family, his orloks and other chieftains; for all their plans and campaigns were decided upon by the assembled chiefs. The Tartars had vanished from the west in order to attend to these important matters.

It was decided at this time to send an army into the west. Batu was given the command of it; he had hundreds of thousands of men and, to lead them, Jenghis' greatest orlok and several of his grandsons, among them Batu's three brothers.

If this mighty expedition could have been seen from the air, it must have looked like a whole people moving, or like a swarm of locusts or grasshoppers. There was the great army of horsemen, riding in loose formation; innumerable carts carrying ammunition, engines of war and the round tents of the leaders, and, straggling out in all directions, the immense herds of cattle and extra horses. It moved slowly; in the spring of 1237 it assembled at a point between the Volga and Ural rivers.

There the army divided into three parts; one went northward and wiped out the city of Bulgar; another marched south to the Caspian Sea. The third, under Batu and his brothers, went northwest into Russia.

The Tartars had a very efficient spy system; they knew that Vladimir, not Kiev, was the heart of Russia. They waited until autumn, when the rivers were frozen and the harvests laid up in the barns; then they marched into Suzdal from the south.

Batu sent messengers to the Prince of Riazan, which was the first town on their route. "Give me one tenth of everything," he demanded; "one prince in ten, one man in ten; give me one tenth of all black, white, brown and pied horses, one tenth of

every kind of beast and the tenth part of all your wealth." The Prince's answer was brief and proud: "We will give you nothing; when we are dead, then you can have it all."

Batu laid siege to the pretty city of Riazan, while his army destroyed the villages around it, bringing the people in to help with the siege. He made them build a wooden wall around the city, strengthened by earthworks; the Tartars always did this to prevent anyone leaving or entering the besieged place. Then they set up their catapults and balistas and bombarded Riazan day and night. After five days of desperate fighting the city fell, in December, 1237; everyone in it was slaughtered, some in most cruel ways, for the sport of the conquerors. The leaders were usually honored by a horrible death, being flayed or burned alive or impaled on sharp stakes and left to die. When the Tartars had finished and gone, there was only silence, smoking ruins and dead bodies, for the few who escaped had fled into the frozen woods. "No eye was left open to weep for the dead," says the chronicle.

A grandson of Andrei Bogoliubsky, Yuri II, was Grand Prince of Vladimir; he did not send help to Riazan, but waited in his own province. The Tartars moved northward; they took Kolomna and the little town of Moscow, burning them both and killing all the people. After burning Moscow, their army was divided into groups of thousands or hundreds; they spread over the country like a great net, following every road; not a village was spared, even when the people came out, led by their priests, prostrating themselves in surrender. In February, 1238, they reached Vladimir.

Yuri, willing to ask for help although he had given none, had left the city, thinking it too strong to be taken. The people watched the Tartars surround it and force their captives to build a wall around it and a wide earthen ramp as high as their walls. The Tartars showed them the young son of Yuri, whom they had captured in Moscow; the people wept, but they could not yield their city for one boy. They knew that they, too, must

die and they resolved to sell their lives dear. Everyone who could, young and old, helped in the defense; they hardly slept or took their clothes off; the old and weak crowded the churches and became monks or nuns in order to die blessed.

On a Sunday, eleven days after they had appeared there, the Tartars broke into Vladimir, over the walls and through the Golden Gate. The people fought in the streets, not because they hoped to live but in order to kill as many of their destroyers as possible. Yuri's wife and children, with the other women and children of the city, crowded into the cathedral that Andrei had built. The Tartars broke down the door and rushed in, killing everyone they met. Then they brought in wood, piled it up and set it afire. The strong walls stood and still stand now, but everyone perished. It was easy to burn down Russian cities, for almost all the houses were of wood; the Tartars loved to kill; after a few days they left Vladimir ruined and silent and went on through Suzdal, robbing, burning and killing.

The Grand Prince, Yuri, with other forces he had gathered together, met the Tartars at last and gave them battle, but in vain, for their enemies outnumbered them ten to one. Yuri was left, headless, on the battlefield, and the Tartars swept northwestward, toward Novgorod, destroying everything on their way.

Novgorod was saved by an early thaw. In March the snows began to melt; the rivers broke their ice and overflowed and the marshes became treacherous. Hundreds of miles of marsh and forest lay before the Tartars and they disliked both. They turned back to the steppe, driving an army of captives and hundreds of wagons loaded with booty. They camped near the Volga and during the summer they rested and pastured their horses.

When the rivers were frozen again, they moved directly westward from their camping ground and overran the southern provinces. They took and destroyed the old cities of Pereyasavl and Chernigov; in 1239 all the country east of the Dnieper was

in their hands. Batu rode to the bank of the river and looked across it to where the golden domes of Kiev stood high on the cliffs, surrounded by strong walls. He sent envoys to demand its surrender but the envoys never returned, for the Russians slew them where they stood.

The next winter Batu returned with reinforcements, for he intended to go much farther than Kiev. Close to half a million men were with him and many famous leaders; as they crossed the frozen river the creaking of their wagons, the neighing and squealing of horses and camels, the shouting of men deafened the terrified people of Kiev. No Russian princes were there to defend them; many had been killed, some had fled into Poland and Hungary; no help came from other provinces, for help was useless. Kiev fell in December, 1240, its people fighting street by street, church by church. Their leader, a brave boyar, was brought alive before Batu. "The Russians know well how to drink the cup of death," said the savage leader and spared his life. But he spared no others; the city was sacked and burned, the walls of churches and monasteries crashed to the ground, burying their paintings and carvings in the rubble. Only Yaroslav's Cathedral of St. Sophia stood, though it was injured, white and stark amid the ruins.

The Tartars did not have to leave garrisons behind them to guard what they had conquered, for they left nothing to guard and no one who could raise a rebellion against them. From Kiev they went into Galicia and Volhynia and the same tale of ruin and slaughter was told again. After that, one division went into Poland while another crossed the mountains into Hungary. Everything fell before them; all of Europe was terrified; they reached the Adriatic Sea and overran Serbia and Hungary and Poland. They had nearly reached Vienna when a messenger came to Batu from Mongolia. Jenghis' second son, the Great Khan, was dead; all the members of his family and the great leaders must return to elect a new khan.

Batu sent word to all his orloks, his commanders of thousands and ten thousands; and the whole mighty army turned to trek back four thousand miles into Mongolia.

The Tartar Yoke

BATU DID not go all the way to Mongolia, as his brothers and orloks did. He was not fond of his family and he was well content with the vast empire that he had won. He pitched his camp on the eastern bank of the Volga, where it turns sharply to the southeast and flows toward the Caspian. Rich pastures stretched beyond every horizon and in the midst of them he set up a vast encampment of round felt tents. It was very orderly; each man knew where to pitch his tent, where to place his carts and where to pasture his flocks. Batu's tent faced south and no man might dwell between him and the sun; the camp spread eastward, westward and northward from his tent, which was made of fine white felt, hung inside with Chinese silk woven with gold threads. It was called the Golden Tent and because of it his horde of Tartars were called the Golden Horde. In the summer the whole camp moved north along the Volga to fresh pastures; in the winter they came south again and spent the cold months in their first encampment. This was Batu's headquarters and it was called Sarai.

When he had settled there he sent messengers to all the Russian provinces. After he had led his armies into Hungary and Poland, the Russians had crept out of their hiding places, gone to their ruined towns and built new houses; the princes who had fled to Novgorod or Pskov or to neighboring countries came back and helped their stricken people to clear away the heaps of dead bodies and ruins, to build again, to plant grain and live again. The Tartar messengers found these men and said to them, "Your land is now conquered and you are subjects of Batu Khan. He wishes you to go to Sarai to pay homage to him and to arrange the tribute that you will pay."

One of the younger sons of Big Nest had survived the invasion and returned to Vladimir; he called himself Grand Prince. He knew that he must obey Batu; otherwise the poor remnants of his people would suffer a second time the fearful punishment of the Tartars. So he went down the Volga and presented himself at Sarai.

The Tartars were very superstitious people; they worshipped the sun and fire and certain bushes; every person and everything that entered the presence of the Khan must be purified by passing between two fires that burned before the door of his tent. The Grand Prince was met by sorcerers who told him that he must bow down to the sun and to the sacred bushes; then he and the gifts he had brought must pass between the fires. He was warned, on pain of death, not to step on the threshold of the tent. When he finally entered it, he found Batu seated on a couch covered with gold brocade; beside him sat one of his wives and around him stood his chieftains. The Grand Prince, who remembered well the glory of his father's long reign, had to kneel down and touch his forehead to the ground before the Tartar Khan; then, still kneeling, he had to hear and obey his orders.

"Batu Khan does not wish to dwell in your cities or your forests," said the Tartar interpreters. "He will remain here in Sarai and will allow you to rule your lands in his name. Each year you will bring him your tribute: one tenth of your harvest, one tenth of your flocks and your horses, one tenth of all your produce. He will send men to your towns and cities to make sure that the tenth is paid. If he needs men to fight for him, you will send him the number of men he requires. If this is done, you may live in peace in your lands; if it is not done, you know what will happen."

Then the Russian Prince was offered a golden goblet filled with kumiss, the Tartars' favorite drink; it was fermented mares' milk, tasting like thin, sharp buttermilk, and he had to drink it with a good grace. He had to appear pleased with Tartar

ways, even with their scanty meals and the fire of dried dung and thorns that burned smokily in the center of the tents, for there was no wood on the steppe. He must be careful of all that he did and said, for if he displeased the Khan he would be killed with as little thought as if he were a troublesome dog. He was fortunate enough to go safely back. Batu gave him a sort of charter, called a "yarlik," which permitted him to be Grand Prince: he returned sadly to Vladimir, received the Tartar tax collectors and saw to it that the people, still painfully building up their farms and workshops, paid a tenth of all that they produced to their conquerors.

The Grand Prince had set the example; the other princes also went to Batu to receive his permission to rule their provinces. One of them, Prince Mikhail of Chernigov, an old man, would not bow down to the sun and the bushes. "We are Christians," he said to the sorcerers. "We cannot worship any created thing, but only God who made all things." Batu sent one of his chieftains to Mikhail. "Why will you not obey the Khan?" he asked. "Whoever will not bow to the sun is not worthy to look at it. Why not bow to fire? Save your life and keep your province. You know the price of disobedience." "God has given you to us," answered Mikhail, "because of our sins. I will bow to the Khan because God has given the power to him, but I will never bow to these things." "You have already lost your life," said the Tartar angrily. "I am willing to die for Christ," were Mikhail's last words.

Shortly afterward a party of horsemen rode up. They dismounted, threw the old Prince on the ground and beat him with their fists on the breast near the heart, then stamped on him with their heels until he was dead. A chief must never be killed with the sword, according to Tartar custom; therefore the rulers and leaders of other countries always met a more terrible death than ordinary people.

The other princes followed the example of the Grand Prince: they brought gifts, walked between fires, knelt and beat their

foreheads on the ground before Batu. They were brave and proud men, but this was the only way they could save their own lives and the lives of all those for whom they were responsible.

Sometimes, instead of going to Sarai, they had to go to the court of the Great Khan in Mongolia. The journey was a terrible one to any man except a Tartar; it took at least half a year of travel over steppe and desert and mountain, in the bitter cold of winter or the stifling heat of summer. There was no shelter, very little food or water, and month after month of exhausting riding.

In 1245 the new Great Khan was elected and the Grand Prince of Vladimir, as representative of all the Russians, had to attend this ceremony and offer homage. He took the hard journey in the winter, for the Khan's coronation took place in his summer pavilion near the Tartar city of Karakorum in Mongolia. It was an astonishing sight, if the Grand Prince had had the heart to enjoy it.

Two thousand large white tents and innumerable smaller ones stood on the bleak plain. Hundreds of carts laden with precious gifts stood beside them and around them strayed the innumerable animals of the encampment. All sorts of people were there. Among the Tartars were Russian, Hungarian and Polish men and women who had been enslaved; a French goldsmith and his son were working for the Khan. There were Chinese and Tartar governors of northern China, Persian and Turkish governors and sultans with their followers, two princes of Georgia, ambassadors from the Sultan of Baghdad and other kingdoms subject to the Tartars. There were monks from France and Italy who had taken the long journey to try to persuade the Great Khan to become a Christian. The whole world seemed to have met on that wild plain at the feet of the savage conqueror.

There were feasts and rejoicings, not much to the taste of the foreign visitors. Honor was paid to the Russian Grand Prince, but just as he was ready to leave, he suddenly died. He had

been poisoned, apparently by the mother of the Great Khan; no one knew why.

Many other princes made the long journey to Karakorum; all of them had to go to Batu at Sarai before they could live in their provinces or cities and rebuild, in some measure, the life they had known before. No country ever received a more terrible blow than this conquest: after the frightful destruction and loss of life in the greater part of the land, the Tartars drained the people of their wealth; and, of course, in addition to this heavy tribute, they had to pay taxes to their own princes for the expenses of government. Worse than all was the bitter humiliation of being watched by the Tartar tax collectors, of kneeling before their conquerors and taking their orders. "Worse than all misfortune is honor from the Tartars," said the Prince of Galicia after a journey to Sarai.

This was the Tartar yoke, and the Russians suffered it for the next two hundred years.

Alexander Nevsky

THE HOUSE of Rurik had produced notable men. In the many branches of the ruling family there were fine men at this time: the princes who fell at the Kalka and on other battlefields; men like the Grand Prince and Mikhail of Chernigov and Daniel of Galicia. The most loved and honored of them all, the man to whom all of Russia turned after the Tartar invasion, was Alexander, the eldest son of the Grand Prince.

Alexander was made Prince of Novgorod when he was eight years old, and he spent a large part of his life in that turbulent city. When the Tartars came in 1237, the enemies of Russia in the west took advantage of its distress to gain territory for themselves. Sweden at that time was becoming a strong kingdom and had conquered Finland. In the summer of 1240, when the Tartars were preparing to attack Kiev, Swedish ships entered the Neva River, the gateway to Novgorod from the north. Their

leader sent a message to Alexander, who was then twenty years old: "If you have courage, come here to fight me; behold, I have taken your land and mean to keep it."

Alexander had plenty of courage. The people of Novgorod were frightened; they sent for help to the Grand Prince, Alexander's father, but he, of course, had no help to give nor did anyone else in Russia, because of the Tartars. So Alexander assembled the fighting men of his city and province; the pagan people along the Gulf of Finland feared the Swedes and joined him. The two armies met in July, 1240; the Swedes outnumbered the men of Novgorod but Alexander won the victory. He was at the front of the battle, guiding and cheering his men; he met the Swedish leader and wounded him. During the night, under the pale summer sky, the Swedes sailed away and, when the early dawn came, the river was free of the enemies of Novgorod.

This victory was a great joy to the Russians, in the time of their bitter defeat by the Tartars; everywhere Alexander was praised and he was given the name of "Nevsky" — Alexander of the Neva.

And yet the people of Novgorod could quarrel even with him; shortly after the battle he left them and returned to Suzdal.

He was called back to Novgorod by another danger. The Knights of the Sword,* too, hoped that they could profit by Russia's weakness. They took Pskov, the city that was called Novgorod's younger brother, on the southern shore of Lake Peipus. From there the Knights pressed closer to Novgorod, forcing the pagan tribes to fight for them. Novgorod was in danger and the people knew the only man who could save them. Messengers were sent to the Grand Prince, pleading, "Send us your son Alexander."

Alexander Nevsky went back with them and soon rallied all the fighting men in and near Novgorod; his very presence gave them courage and confidence. He took Pskov and punished

* See page 52.

severely all those who had fought for the Germans. The Knights, who were fighting in another place, laughed at this and boasted that they would catch Alexander and make a show of him, and then conquer and Germanize the whole region. Alexander said very little. He did not want Pskov and its people to be hurt by a siege; so he marched out to meet the Germans.

It was early April, 1242, but Lake Peipus was still frozen solid. He chose it as his battlefield. On that icy plain the German Knights advanced in wedge formation, which the Russians called a "pig's snout." Alexander let it break through the Russian center and then closed in on both sides of it. The Knights were completely defeated; they turned and fled, pursued for miles by their triumphant foes.

All of Pskov, marching out with banners and crosses held high, welcomed the young victor, and Novgorod was proud to have him as their prince. Envoys came to him from the Knights of the Sword to surrender all that they had conquered. One of them said on his return, "I have traveled in many lands and seen many sovereigns, but such a man as Alexander I have not yet seen."

Novgorod had been left in peace by the Tartars, partly because it was far away and they were not tempted by its swampy forests, and partly because they considered that it was subject to Vladimir and therefore indirectly subject to them. But in 1246, when Alexander's father, the Grand Prince of Vladimir, died in Karakorum, the young Prince received a message from Batu. "Prince of Novgorod," it ran, "do you not know that God has submitted a great number of people to us? Will you alone remain free and independent? If you wish to reign peacefully come at once to my Golden Tent to acknowledge the glory and greatness of the Tartars."

It was hard for Alexander Nevsky, who had never been defeated by any enemy, to obey this order. He remembered how his father had humbled himself and knew that this was wise. Taking his younger brother with him he went down the

Volga to Sarai, where he was received with honor, for the Tartars knew a man when they saw one. He had to prostrate himself before the Khan but he was not asked to bow to the sun or to walk between fires. "The truth has been told me," said Batu after receiving him. "There is not another prince like Alexander."

Batu made him Grand Prince in his father's place, but, for some strange reason, assigned to him Kiev and the southern provinces and made his younger brother Prince of Vladimir. Alexander did not quarrel with this decision, which made him prince of practically nothing and which turned out very badly. Worse news followed. Batu told him and his brother that, since the new Great Khan had just been enthroned, they must both go to Karakorum to pay homage to him.

Remembering their father's death at the court of this same Khan, they set out with heavy hearts on the hard journey, traveling through the desolate sandy steppe north of the Caspian, over the endless miles of grassy steppe where they saw no other human being for days at a time, over the icy passes of the mountains of Mongolia and over that bleak plateau to the fantastic court of the Great Khan. No harm befell them there but it was two years before they were home again.

Since Kiev was ruined, Alexander spent most of his time in Novgorod where he was sorely needed. For after he, as Prince of Novgorod, had paid homage to Batu, the Tartar tax collectors were sent there. The new Great Khan had ordered that every person and every animal in Russia be counted; detachments of Tartars were sent to every province to take the census and to collect tribute based on their count. After this, instead of a tenth of its produce, every household must pay a fixed amount and this tax was worse than the old one. The free people of Novgorod would not submit to the census; the *vieche* met in an uproar. "We will die for the liberties of Novgorod the Great!" they shouted. "We will die for St. Sophia and the homes of the saints!" They attacked the Tartar horsemen as they rode through

the gates. The Tartars, furious, were about to return to Batu. "You shall know what Tartar anger means," they cried. "You shall perish for your insolence."

Only Alexander could have pacified them; only he could persuade them to stay and to be patient. Only he could have mounted the platform in Yaroslav's Court and told the enraged people that there was nothing to do but submit to the conquerors unless they wanted their beloved city to suffer the fate of Kiev and Vladimir. He succeeded in persuading both sides; the census was taken and the tribute paid.

But Alexander Nevsky had no rest from fighting and sorrow. His brother was foolish and defiant of Tartar rule, so Batu sent a troop of Tartars to ravage Suzdal and drive out the young Prince who, after a futile fight, fled to Riga on the Baltic coast. Alexander went to Sarai and begged forgiveness for his brother, pleading that he was young and headstrong. Batu granted the pardon and made Alexander Grand Prince of Vladimir, as he should have done before. There were further attacks to be fought off in the west. He made one amazing campaign against the Swedes, when he traveled hundreds of miles through the trackless forests and snows up to Lapland, where he showed the Swedes the northern boundaries of Novgorod.

But his splendid strength was breaking down under the constant long and difficult journeys, under the strain of protecting Russia from its enemies in the west and its masters in the east. Batu died and Alexander had to go again to Sarai to pay homage to the new Khan of the Golden Horde. In 1262 the tribute was so heavy that the people rose up in Suzdal and killed the tax collectors; there was danger of widespread rebellion. Alexander went again to the Khan to ask to have the burden lightened and to ask that no more Russians be called to fight in the Tartar armies. He took precious gifts with him to soften the Tartar heart; he succeeded, as he always did. But that was the last thing he did for his country. On the way back he died, exhausted, only forty-three years old.

His friend and advisor, the Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church, mounted the pulpit in Vladimir and said to the sorrowing people, "Know, my dear children, that the sun of Russia has set."



CHAPTER VI

THE RISE OF MOSCOW

Its First Princes

WHEN ALEXANDER NEVSKY died, his youngest son, Daniel, was only two years old; but according to custom, he was given a bit of his father's province to rule over and was put in charge of some of Alexander's boyars until he should come of age. He received the little town of Moscow on the Moskva River. His uncles and his older brothers quarreled and fought for the title of Grand Prince, but Daniel was left in peace all his life in Moscow, because the place was not very important.

Russians towns were easy to burn down but they were also easy to build up again. Materials, in the form of the strong trunks of oak and fir trees, were standing about in abundance; these, laid horizontally one on another, their chinks filled in with clay and moss, were quickly shaped into houses and strong walls. They were used to build elaborate churches as well.

Moscow had been burned by the Tartars in 1237, but in thirty years' time it was a flourishing town again. Daniel, who more than any of Nevsky's sons inherited his father's noble character, ruled peacefully, and settlers crowded into his small province because there was order there and a chance to work undisturbed.

It is hard to believe that, during the terrible invasion of the Tartars and after it, the Russian princes continued their quarrels and their battles; but it is true. Not only did they fight each other; they sought the favor of the Tartars in their quarrels and did not hesitate to use Tartar armies against each other as, years before, they had called the Polovtses in to fight for them. One of the very worst of these princely feuds was the one between the princes of Moscow and of Tver. It lasted altogether for eighty years; it illustrates one aspect of life under the Tartar yoke.

During Daniel's lifetime five princes held the rather empty title of Grand Prince. In 1304 one of these, a brother of Daniel, died, and two men claimed the throne. One was Yuri, Daniel's son and therefore a nephew of the man who had just died; the other was a cousin, Mikhail, Prince of Tver. Mikhail therefore had the better right to the throne, since he was of the elder generation. Both went to the Golden Horde to receive the *yarlik*, or charter, from the Khan, who gave it to Mikhail. The people of Vladimir and Novgorod also supported him.

This should have been enough to decide the issue, but Yuri, who was more like his ancestor and namesake, Yuri Dolgoruki, than he was like his father or grandfather, did not mean to let the matter drop. Next to the Khan, the strongest power in the land was Novgorod, because of its vast empire in the north beyond the reach of the Tartars and because of the money that flowed into its markets from northern Europe. Yuri began to plot with Novgorod against Mikhail, for Novgorod always had boundary disputes with Tver and was ready enough to quarrel.

In 1312 the Tartar Khan died and Mikhail went to Sarai to pay homage to Uzbek, the new Khan. Uzbek renewed his *yarlik*

as Grand Prince, but he kept Mikhail at Sarai for more than a year. During this time he complained to the Khan about Yuri, and Yuri was summoned to Sarai to answer his charges.

Sarai had now grown into a city, with brick and stone buildings, markets and many different places of worship: mosques for the Moslems and churches for both Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians; for the Genoese and Venetian merchants, who had taken over so much of the trade that once belonged to Byzantium, came often to Sarai. The Tartars themselves were clever merchants and encouraged trade; while they ruled most of Asia it was safe to travel from one end of the great continent to the other.

During Mikhail's absence, Yuri had won Novgorod over to his side. He came to Sarai with men of Novgorod in his company and money from Novgorod in his pockets. The Tartars liked him because he was easy-going and jovial; he knew how to give fine presents, feasted and hunted with them, while Mikhail was sober and careful. Yuri stayed with them for about two years. He made friends among them, especially of Uzbek's bravest general, and he also courted the Khan's favorite sister; whether for political reasons or because the lady was beautiful, who can tell? At all events, when he returned to Moscow he came as the Khan's son-in-law, at the head of a Tartar army and with the yarlik of Grand Prince, for Uzbek had changed his mind and given the title to his new favorite.

Mikhail gave up, yielded the throne, and asked only to be left in peace in Tver.

But Yuri, vindictive and relentless, would not do even this. With his Tartar army, headed by his friend the general, he marched on Tver. Mikhail, goaded to anger, met him and defeated him; but the victory was embarrassing and dangerous. He had fought and killed Tartars; the Tartar general and Yuri's wife, the sister of the mighty Uzbek, were his prisoners. He treated them both with great honor and made them comfortable in his palace, but a serious misfortune befell him. The

Tartar Princess fell ill and died while in his care. Mikhail, although he was the rightful Prince, and was supported by his people, now despaired of his life. He proposed to Yuri that they both go to Sarai to present their cases to Uzbek.

Yuri went at once, carrying rich gifts, and was received by his Tartar friends as one of them. Mikhail delayed; his boyars and his sons feared for his life. "Send us," said his sons. "The Tartars hate you because you have defeated them. Go when their rage has calmed down." "The Khan wants me," answered Mikhail, "not you. I must die sometime; better die now and save others from his vengeance." He made his will, as most Russian princes did before going to Sarai, and put his affairs in order.

When he reached Sarai he found that Uzbek had gone down to the mouth of the Don and there, finally, Mikhail presented his gifts and prostrated himself. He was brought to trial after a few weeks and Yuri was one of those who testified against him. The Tartar judges said, "You are haughty and disobedient; you have kept back the Khan's tribute, fought with his general and poisoned his sister." "I have obeyed the Khan," answered Mikhail fearlessly, "and I obey him now. I give him accurate tribute. The Khan's general attacked me with warriors; I had to defend myself. I did not kill Yuri's wife; she died of illness." Nevertheless the judges reported to the Khan, "Mikhail is worthy of death."

Uzbek delayed his judgment and Mikhail suffered worse punishment than a quick death. The Khan was starting on a hunting expedition into the Caucasus Mountains; the Tartars loved to hunt and these trips were very festive affairs. Thousands of men took part in them, dressed in their best, riding their finest horses, holding their favorite falcons on their wrists. Hundreds of wagons followed them laden with fine foods and wines, for the Tartars were no longer the hardy, frugal warriors of the time of Jenghis Khan; conquest and civilization had softened them. Behind this train, choked with its dust, Prince Mikhail

went on foot, carrying on his shoulders a heavy wooden frame, called a "kang," in which his head and wrists were fastened.

For weeks he traveled this way, dragging himself behind the festive horde, an object of ridicule in the towns where they stopped. Yuri rode among the Tartars, his heart in no way softened by Mikhail's anguish. At last the Khan remembered his prisoner and sentenced him to death. Yuri, his Tartar friend and a body of horsemen, rode up to where Mikhail was sitting exhausted. He was thrown down and trampled to death as his namesake, Mikhail of Chernigov, had been killed years before. A Russian gave him the final blow, but a Tartar, turning to Yuri, said, "How can you look on at this? He was your elder. At least cover his body!" And one of Yuri's servants threw a mantle over it.

This was not the end of the feud, for Mikhail's son did not forget his father's death. His anger so possessed him that he was known as "Dmitri of the Terrible Eyes." He succeeded his father as Prince of Tver and went to Sarai to pay homage as usual. He took advantage of this time to tell Uzbek the whole story of Yuri's persecution of his father and the Khan, who was apt to believe the last person he heard, sent him back with the yarlik of Grand Prince and summoned Yuri to Sarai. Dmitri blocked his way and Yuri had to go away over to Perm, near the Ural Mountains, down the Kama River into the Volga and so to Sarai. Dmitri followed him. He had not seen Yuri since his father's death. As soon as he met his enemy in Sarai, his anger blazed up; he drew his sword and plunged it into Yuri's body. This was an offense to the Khan; Dmitri was kept for nearly a year at the court and then was killed in the usual way. His brother was made Grand Prince.

John Moneybag

THIS FEUD was like the old one between Kiev and Chernigov, in southern Rus. As the princes of those two provinces fought

for the possession of what was then the most important place in the land, so the princes of Tver and Moscow fought for what was now the most important place — the northeastern provinces that lay between the Tartars and Novgorod, and within easy distance of all the great rivers. Tver lay between Moscow and Novgorod, which was the only free outlet to other lands; Moscow, with its control over most of the province of Suzdal, lay between Tver and the great river road of the Volga. Each wanted the right of way to both these outlets and the only way they knew of getting it was to fight for it.

Fighting had become a habit, hard to throw off; the princes fought with no thought of their country's or their people's welfare; indeed, with no thought of their own welfare. They devastated their own land when it was struggling to recover from the worse devastation of the Tartars; they had no mercy for the small folk whose lives they made miserable instead of protecting them. There were always men like Andrei Bogoliubsky, like Alexander Nevsky and his son Daniel; but these men, up to this time, were exceptions.

The seed that Andrei had planted in Suzdal, however, had not died. His idea of a strong ruler, a central power in the whole of the Russian land, grew in the mind of his descendant, Ivan the son of Daniel, and was realized more fully by him. Ivan was Yuri's younger brother. These two, born just after the Tartar invasion, were in a way symbols of the past and of the future: Yuri, spendthrift, looking backward, fighting blindly for what he thought was his right, created disorder and discord and finally destroyed himself; Ivan, far-sighted, shrewd, careful with money, by creating order and harmony among the provinces, gathered into his hands a new, undreamed-of power and saved himself and his country from the dangers that beset them from every side.

He had taken no part in Yuri's feud with Tver; he was content to live in Moscow and to beautify and strengthen it, as Andrei had done in Vladimir. He inherited the feud, however,

and put an end to it very effectively, at least for his own lifetime.

When he heard that Yuri had been killed and that Mikhail's brother had been made Grand Prince, he did not question the decision and made no move against the Prince of Tver. But fate played into his hands. The people and the rulers of Tver had often been defiant of Tartar rule. A year after the new Prince had received the yarlik from the Khan, one of Uzbek's cousins, with a great train of Tartar warriors and merchants, visited Tver. Their chief was given the Prince's palace and his followers were entertained by the wealthier citizens. Tartars were never pleasant or welcome visitors; a street fight started one morning and in a few hours became an open rebellion. The Grand Prince, less wise than Nevsky had been in Novgorod, led the people on and set fire to his own palace, in which the Tartar chief and many others were burned to death. Not one of the visitors left Tver alive.

When Uzbek heard of this he was nearly mad with rage; never before had the power of the Golden Horde been so shamelessly defied. He summoned Ivan, since the Princes of Moscow were hereditary enemies of Tver; Ivan saw his chance and arrived with surprising speed at Sarai. There Uzbek ordered him to destroy Tver and gave him an army of fifty thousand Tartars led by five of his best commanders.

At the head of these troops Ivan returned and destroyed Tver, as he had been told to do. It was like the Tartar invasions a hundred years before. The city of Tver was burned to the ground; its people were slaughtered or enslaved unless they could escape in time to the forests; the other towns and villages suffered the same fate. The Grand Prince fled to Novgorod and then to Pskov; for the people of Novgorod, terrified by what had happened to Tver, hurried to offer their homage and tribute to the Horde. At last the Tartars, satisfied, turned and went slowly southward, driving cattle, captives and cartloads of booty, as in the old days.

Ivan went to Sarai to tell Uzbek that his orders had been

carried out. He suggested that there might be less trouble if one Russian prince collected all the tribute from the Russian provinces and delivered it regularly to the Khan. This seemed an excellent idea; and what prince was more trustworthy than the obedient and respectful Ivan? He was given the yarlik of Grand Prince and allowed to collect the tribute. This privilege, as well as the favor that Uzbek always showed him, gave him great power over the other princes. He was a clever and careful financier, realizing that money was both a safer and a surer weapon than the sword in dealing with Tartars. All that Uzbek wanted of his Russian empire was the tribute it brought him; if there was enough of it and if it was delivered faithfully to him the land was left in peace. Ivan collected it mercilessly from the other provinces and paid it promptly and accurately. For forty years after he became Grand Prince, during his reign and his sons' reigns, there were no Tartar raids.

Ivan wore at his girdle a large moneybag, a gift, it is said, from the Khan; it was called a "kalita" and he was called Ivan Kalita, or John Moneybag. When he went through the streets, he often thrust his hand into it and gave money to the poor; the fate of Moscow and of all the Russian people lay in that bag, held firmly in Ivan's hand.

He used money for many purposes. Instead of fighting for more land, he bought it. Landowners made poor by warfare sold him villages and forests; princes unable to deliver their tribute paid him in land. His province of Moscow increased in size; since Daniel's time, through conquest or purchase, he and Yuri had increased it three or fourfold. It was recognized now as the Russian capital; it stood in the heart of the Russian land, protected by other provinces from attack from any side, at the center of the far-reaching river system that flowed to the north, south, east and west. Its princes kept order in their province and protected it from danger; therefore settlers flowed into it, hewed villages along its rivers, cleared the land and built up its towns.

Moscow quickly grew into a city. Ivan built a strong wall of

oak around it, to defend it. A walled fortress was called a "kremlin"; Ivan's wall surrounded a part of what is now the magnificent enclosure of the Kremlin of Moscow. He built churches and monasteries: a brick church dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel; the Cathedral of the Assumption in stone. His city gained great prestige when the Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church made it the spiritual capital by coming to live there.

The heads of the Church had continued for almost sixty years to live in ruined Kiev because the Monastery of the Caves and the Cathedral of St. Sophia were very dear to them; but at the beginning of the thirteenth century they moved to Vladimir.

In Ivan's time the Metropolitan was a saintly man who made many a journey to the Horde to ask for mercy for his people, and many a journey from province to province to help and comfort those who were in trouble, or to advise or rebuke the rulers. He often stopped at Moscow; he became a friend of Ivan and had planned with him the building of the cathedral. He happened to be at Moscow at the time of his death and, during his last days, he said to Ivan, "My son, if you listen to me and lay me to rest in your city, then you will be glorified above all other princes and your sons and grandsons also and this city will be glorified above all other Russian towns. The saints will come to dwell in it and its hands shall prevail against the breasts of its enemies. Thus it shall be as long as my bones shall lie in it." After this holy man had died in Moscow the Metropolitans who came after him lived there too and brought great honor to it.

Here, in Ivan Kalita, was a new kind of prince and ruler — not the gallant merchant prince of the old days, not the heroic fighter, like Nevsky — but a man who shaped his policy to the times he lived in, using obedience where defiance would have failed, using money to buy peace when the sword would have invited calamity, winning by shrewdness what mere courage would have lost; a man who, beset by enemies stronger than he

was and still under the Tartar yoke, planned for a glorious future and called himself "Prince of Moscow and of all the Russias."

The Rise of Lithuania

WHAT, AT that time, did "all the Russias" mean?

The shock of the Tartar conquest broke the loose union of the Russian provinces into several pieces. This union had always been a curious one; it had never even had a name. The people had been called Russians ever since Rurik's day, but, as the country grew, the name of Rus or Russia was given to the southern provinces alone. Men spoke of traveling "from Novgorod into Russia" and even "from Vladimir into Russia." The provinces were spread over a vast territory and, before this, might easily have become separate states, except for certain important things that they had in common and that were a strong bond between them: the flatness and sameness of the land which offered no borders or boundaries; the river system which connected every province with every other; the common ancestry of the ruling princes who were all descended from Rurik, from Vladimir I and Yaroslav; the religion which meant so much to them and which was more centralized than the government, for the Metropolitan had far more power in spiritual matters than the Grand Prince had in earthly ones. The conditions of life, the habits of the people were very much alike in all parts of the land, while at the same time they were separated on all sides from other people by the invisible but powerful barrier of religious difference.

The Tartar conquest broke into pieces even this widespread community, so mighty was the blow; the provinces fell into two parts and the dividing line between them was, roughly, their original life line, the Dnieper water road.

In the west were Galicia and Volhynia, provinces rich in minerals, in meadowland and pasture; they bordered on Poland and Hungary. These were conquered by the Tartars and paid

tribute to the Horde, like the others. They were too far away from Vladimir and Moscow to be ruled by any Grand Prince in such troubled times. Their own prince, Daniel, was courageous and able; he hated the Tartar yoke and turned for help to the west, even listening to the Pope who hoped to win the Russians, when they were in such distress, over to the Roman Church. The Pope made Daniel King of Galicia and Volhynia in 1254, but Daniel never gave up his allegiance to his own faith.

North of Volhynia was Polotsk; east were Kiev and the old cities of Chernigov and Pereyasavl, so ruined now that no one fought for them any longer. This whole southwestern part of the Russian land fell into the hands of people who, until after the Tartar conquest, had played no part at all on the great stage of steppe and forest. It became a part of Lithuania.

The Lithuanians, a peaceful pagan people living between the Western Dvina and the Niemen rivers, had been driven into their forests, as we have already seen, by the marauding zeal of the Sword-Bearing Knights. Unfortunately, there was another order of German crusaders known as the Teutonic Knights, who had originally fought against the Turks in Palestine and then, after the Crusades had failed, came to Prussia, on the southern shore of the Baltic Sea, to fight against the pagan people there. For neither the Orthodox Church in the east nor the Roman Catholic in the west had reached the Slavic people of Prussia or the Lithuanians. The Teutonic Knights, in their religious enthusiasm, nearly killed off the Prussians, took their lands and made slaves of the people who remained. In the early thirteenth century they joined forces with the Knights of the Sword and together terrorized the eastern shores of the Baltic, raiding the simple villages, burning the houses, enslaving the people and taking off their children as hostages.

The Lithuanians alone succeeded in standing against these dangerous enemies; at the cost of constant fighting they kept their freedom and their old religion. They were not tempted by the kind of Christianity that the Knights practised and,



indeed, if they had become Christian, it would have taken away the Knights' excuse for plundering, killing and conquering more land. Crusades were declared against the Lithuanians, "the last pagan people in Europe," and knights came from many countries, not dreaming, probably, of the true situation. The "parfit, gentle knight" of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* had taken his turn there.

*Ful ofte tyme he had the bord bigonne
Above alle nacions in Pruce;
In Lettowe * had he reysed and in Ruce.*

Goaded by the cruelty and persistence of the Knights, the Lithuanians grew into a united nation and produced great leaders. One of these, Gedimin, who lived at the time of Ivan Kalita, appealed to the Pope and to the kings of Europe, who knew nothing of the true state of affairs. Even the German people who lived in the lands belonging to the Teutonic Knights did not like them; it was the archbishop of Riga who helped Gedimin to write his letters in Latin, which at that time was the written language of the whole of Europe.

"Listen to us, O princes secular and spiritual," he wrote; "the Knights are not seeking our souls for God; they are seeking our land for their own use. They have brought us to this, that we must either beg or steal to save our lives. The Knights are worse than Tartars; they do not let us kill a beast or catch a fish or trade with our neighbors. They take our children as hostages, they imprison our elders and take our sisters and daughters for themselves. And still these men wear the Cross of Christ on their mantles! Have pity on us; we are men and not wild beasts. We wish to be baptized not in blood but in holy water."

Gedimin became a Christian but his people would not accept the hated religion; the Knights also put obstacles in his way and finally he himself gave it up. He fought again and again,

* *Lithuania.*

often successfully, against the Germans. He also took over, with very little trouble, a vast amount of the territory that had once belonged to Rus. He conquered with hardly a fight the provinces of Polotsk and Kiev; he married his son to the daughter and only heir of the King of Galicia and so added that kingdom to his own. One daughter he married to Kalita's son and another to the King of Poland. He was a wise and strong ruler; before he died he reigned over a powerful kingdom that included all the old Russian provinces west of the Dnieper.

As far as one can tell from the meager histories of the times the Russian people were willing enough to accept his rule. Here was a strong prince who could protect them even from the Tartars, for Gedimin paid no tribute to the Horde and all the lands under his rule were free of Tartar tax collectors and Tartar raids. He did not interfere with their religion or their ways of living; often the Russian prince was left in possession of his city or his province so long as he paid homage to this generous pagan ruler. Lithuania was very like the Russians' country in climate and land; it was only a national borderline that was changed.

Ivan Kalita, as Grand Prince, had control over the eastern and northeastern provinces — most of Chernigov and Smolensk, Riazan, Suzdal and Tver. He had a less firm hand on Novgorod, which was now a powerful republic, choosing a prince when it wanted one, running its own affairs, playing off Moscow against Lithuania and vice versa, growing rich on the trade with northern Europe, all of which went through its hands. Novgorod was jealous of any control; no Grand Prince or Tartar was allowed to set foot in the great fur empire of the north and east. Freebooters from Novgorod sailed down the rivers into Suzdal and Tver, robbing and raiding, and no one could stop them. Only one thing, beside the common religion and tradition, held the men of Novgorod unwillingly to Moscow — the need for food. Their European customers could not feed them nor could they raise their own food. From "down the rivers," the

"Low Land," as they called Tver and Suzdal, came the life-giving grain for which they had to give their grudging allegiance.

About 1340, within a year or so of each other, three men died, who held in their hands the lives and fortunes of many people. Uzbek Khan died, one of the most powerful leaders of the Golden Horde. He had become a Moslem and, following his example, all the western Tartars became followers of Mohammed. Gedimin died and was burned, after the pagan manner, with his war horse and his favorite servant. And in Moscow, Ivan Kalita died, only fifty years of age. In his loosely held domain, surrounded by Tartars, Lithuanians and rebellious Novgorod, he seemed the weakest of them all.



CHAPTER VII

THE GATHERERS OF THE RUSSIAN LAND

The People's Lives

HOW DID THE people — the farmers and fishermen, the workmen and merchants, the boatmen and hunters — fare during these dark centuries of the Tartar yoke? It is hard to know, for so few people knew how to read and write that few records were kept. Besides, so much was destroyed — so many churches and monasteries where books were written and kept, so many houses and palaces were burned, rebuilt and burned again — that we cannot tell what histories, what biographies and poems may have been lost.

It is not hard, however, to picture their lives, in the light of the great events that had shaken the whole country. During the Tartar invasion, during raids, or when Ivan Kalita led the Tartar armies against Tver, they suffered every form of pain and death. From their burning homes they ran out upon the

cruel enemies' spears and arrows; they perished in flaming churches; they saw their children killed or carried weeping into slavery; they fled into the forests in midwinter, afraid to light a fire lest the Tartars find them. Thousands must have lain down in the snow to die, too numb with cold to go farther, too weak to battle against the blizzards that came screaming through the pines, driving the snow up from the ground until there was no earth nor heaven — nothing but a whirling, stinging tempest of snow. "Many people are led away into captivity," says one of the remaining chronicles. "Sad and weary, stiff with cold, their faces worn with sorrow, barefoot and naked, torn by the thistles, the Russian prisoners trudge along through an unknown land and, weeping, say to one another, 'I am from such a town' and 'I from such a village.'"

Those who escaped and those who lived in the territories of Novgorod or in hamlets so distant that the waves of destruction passed by them suffered hardship because of the tribute that no one could escape. It fell more heavily on the poor than on the rich, for the tribute was levied on every household, whether rich or poor; every family had to pay so much in fur or money or produce.

The migration that had already begun, from the southern provinces into the west and into the northeast, was increased by the Tartar invasion. People trekked into the west until they were far enough away to be free of both raids and tribute and were under the protection of the strong Lithuanian princes; they came into Moscow and Suzdal, where they had forty years of peace under Ivan Kalita and his sons. All along the network of rivers, large and small, they hewed villages and cleared the land, axe in hand, like the later pioneers in America; first felling the trees, then burning the undergrowth and stumps, then pulling out the stumps, and finally plowing and sowing the clayey earth.

The land, even then, was not very fertile; there were many swamps and the forest was everywhere; the summer was so

short that a late frost, or an early one, might ruin a year's harvest; and the winter was long and hard. They must pay rent for their land to whomever it belonged, the prince who ruled the province, or the monastery or boyar to whom the prince had given a gift of land. It never belonged to the peasant, who had to pay rent and tribute and still raise enough food from the ungrateful soil to feed himself and his family. His life was hard. Yet hamlets and villages grew up everywhere, for more and more of the Russian land was being cultivated, and this fact made many far-reaching changes in the lives of all its people.

The Rus of which Kiev was the capital had grown up along the great trade route between the Baltic and the Black seas. In the markets at both ends of this route the Russians sold their furs and honey and slaves. They also carried the rich goods of the East up to Novgorod and the other cities. This trade filled the pockets of the merchants and princes with money and gave work to thousands of people who crowded into the workshops and the markets of the towns.

Now their trade was almost destroyed. After the French and Venetians took Byzantium in 1204, most of the goods from the East were loaded on to Venetian ships in Egypt or Syria and taken directly to western and northern Europe, instead of going through the markets of Byzantium and Rus. Byzantium was no longer so rich and powerful as it had been and did not pay such good prices to Russian merchants. Besides, everything that went to the Black or the Caspian Sea had to pass through the hands of the Tartars, who were shrewd merchants themselves and who took so much in tolls and customs that there was little profit left. Everything that went through Novgorod had to go through German hands, for the merchants of the powerful Hanseatic League, an association of German trading cities, had settled in Novgorod; they bought what the Russians had to sell and carried it in their own ships to northern Europe and of course took a large part of the profits.

Moscow and the provinces around it were shut in on all sides — by Tartars, Lithuanians and Germans — from their foreign markets. Although their trade went on, it was so much less profitable than it had been when the Russian cities were founded that the whole economy of the country changed. They had, of course, always farmed and fished and hunted, but they had traded, too. From now on, the people must live off the land alone. For this reason, when they came into the northern provinces they did not crowd into the cities, which had, in any case, been largely destroyed by the Tartars, but spread out over the land and along the rivers.

Sometimes a single family — a man and woman and their children — made a new home for themselves, but this was rare. People traveled in groups, for the Russians love to work together and are cooperative by nature. Sometimes a large family — several brothers, perhaps, with their parents and their children — settled in a clearing. They lived together in a big household, and worked the land together, pooling their work and their tools, paying their rent and tribute as a group.

Sometimes a whole village moved to a new place. They rented so much land from a prince or a boyar and worked it together. Each man had his own cabin and yard, but the plow-land and meadow, the pasture and woodland, belonged to the whole group and parts of it were allotted to each family for its use. The concerns of the whole group were discussed and decided in a village meeting which was like the *vieche* in the city. They met out-of-doors, usually on the one street of the village, for there was never a building large enough to hold them all. One of the older men was elected leader, or headman. All questions were freely discussed and were decided upon, unanimously when possible; for the Russians have never liked majority rule, which may impose the will of fifty-one upon the other forty-nine. They preferred complete agreement. If that could not be had, the meeting usually broke up, to talk the matter over in smaller groups and to meet again, when the

minority had either been persuaded or had decided to yield to the wishes of the larger party.

This village commune was called the "mir," which means the world, for the land and the village were truly the whole world of the peasant. The mir, at its meeting, decided when the fields should be plowed and sown and when the harvest should be reaped; the mir decided how much land each family should have and how much it should contribute to the rent and the tribute which must be paid. The mir ruled the lives of all its members, but usually for their own good, since all were equal and all had the same interests. "What the mir has settled is God's own judgment." "All for one and one for all, that is the mir," the people said.

In the same way, with the same gift for cooperation, workmen formed groups that they called artels. Boatmen, fishermen, hunters, carpenters — all sorts of people did their work together, sharing their tools, sharing their profits and their taxes.

The change from trading to farming made another great difference in people's lives. In the old days, a prince paid his druzhina and his boyars for their service to him either in money, which was plentiful, or by letting them join his trading expeditions, or by giving them houses and lands in and near his city. Now money was scarce and the other rewards were of no value. So the princes began to pay their boyars in land, giving them hundreds or thousands of acres. With the land went the villages and the people, who found themselves overnight with a new landlord who might ask a higher rent than the prince had asked. This did not make life any easier for them. If they did not like their landlord, they were free to go away, which they often did, in the autumn after the harvest had been gathered and their rent paid. They left the cleared land for other farmers and moved away, always toward the north and the northeast; for in the south the Tartars rode. If they moved far enough away, into the wilderness, into still colder lands, they might even escape the prince and the landlord. If they must have a landlord, they

preferred to build their cabins outside the walls of a monastery where they could have the blessings of the holy men within. For many monks, too, had sought the wilderness.

St. Sergius of Radonezh

IN THE city of Rostov, in the early fourteenth century, a boy walked out into the pasture adjoining his father's house to look for a foal that had strayed. The boy was sad and disheartened because he could not learn to read. His father was of noble birth and sent his three sons to the priest to be taught to read and write; the eldest and even the youngest, learned well and quickly, but this boy, the second son, could not seem to master his letters. "O Lord," he prayed, as he walked out in the pleasant sunlight, "help me to understand this book learning." In the pasture he met a monk standing under an oak tree and this monk seemed to him to have the face of an angel; he went up to him and bowed very low. "What are you seeking, child?" asked the monk. "My soul desires to understand the Holy Scriptures," answered the boy, "but I am sorely vexed because I cannot learn to read them nor to write. Please pray to God for me that he will give me understanding of book learning."

The holy man gave him a small piece of bread. "This is given to you as a sign of God's grace," he said. "It is small but it tastes very sweet. From now on God will give you learning beyond those of your age." "Pray, Father," said the boy, "come home with me and dine with us. My parents will be overjoyed to see you."

They went home together and the boy's parents welcomed his new friend and begged him to stay and eat with them. But before he would sit down with them, he took the boy into the little chapel of his father's house. "Take up that book," he said, "and read me a Psalm." "I do not know how to read, Father." "I told you," answered the monk, "that from this day forth God would give you knowledge. Therefore do not doubt." The

boy picked up the book and read the Psalm aloud with no trouble at all and there was great joy in the house. Before the monk left he said to the parents, "Your son will be great before God and man."

After that, great misfortunes came upon the family. The Tartars came one winter, took away their animals and burned their barns; early frosts spoiled their harvests but the same tribute was demanded by the Tartar tax collectors, whether the crops were good or bad. The worst misfortune came when the Grand Prince of Moscow, Ivan Kalita, fought against Rostov and took the city. He turned the rich citizens out of their houses and gave the houses to his own boyars; he levied a heavy tribute and brought great distress to Rostov. The boy's family was ruined; they left the city and went to a little place called Radonezh, where they lived like peasants in a small cabin, raising the food they ate and making their own clothes.

The eldest and youngest sons married and left their parents but the second son said to his parents, "From childhood I have loved God; and I have set my heart upon Him for many years. I want to become a monk." But they begged him to stay with them. "Bear with us, my son," said his father. "We are old and poor and have no one but you to care for us." So he stayed cheerfully and cared for them until they died, working for them and making them comfortable.

When they died he was free to do what he had always wanted to do. His elder brother's wife had died and he, too, wanted to be a monk. So the two young men went into the wilderness, as so many others who belonged to the Orthodox faith had done before them. They explored the forest southeast of Radonezh and came finally to a place that had been cleared and left bare, on a hill near a stream. There they built first a cabin of logs and then a little chapel which they dedicated to the Holy Trinity. They sowed some grain and planted some vegetables, gathering their small harvest before the winter set in. No path led to their distant clearing and no road ran anywhere near. Eating very

little, waking each night to pray and meditate, they set themselves to master their bodies and minds so that they might "set their hearts on God." They learned to bear the bitter cold of winter when the snow buried their hut and chapel and the storms howled through the forest. They lived on the little store of grain and vegetables and a few fishes that they caught through the ice of the stream.

It is hard to live completely apart from other people, with nothing to do but think and pray and discipline oneself to hardship. The elder brother could not stand the solitude and hardship; he went to a monastery in Moscow, which was about forty-five miles away. But the younger one stayed on alone. He went to the nearest abbot and was made a monk, taking the name of Sergius. Then he went back to the cabin.

It is said of him, although it is hard to believe, that he never lit a fire in his cabin and that he wore the same garment winter and summer. The wild animals came and looked curiously at him; they sniffed at the crack of his door and whined for food. A bear grew very friendly and Sergius shared with him whatever food there was, even if there were only a few crumbs. In his solitude the young monk found what he had come to the wilderness for: he succeeded in setting his heart on God alone and in doing what he believed God wanted him to do. When a man truly does that, he gains a kind of wisdom and judgment that are rare and useful; other people perceive it easily and usually seek him out, wherever he may be, to ask for his help and advice.

After Sergius had lived for a few years in his wilderness, other men came to him and asked to join him. Each one built himself a hut and they all worked together to raise grain and vegetables for their food (for no monk ate any meat) and to make their shoes and clothes and candles for the church, for Orthodox monks always did all their own work. More and more men came and Sergius never turned away anyone who

truly wanted to stay. His brother came back from Moscow, bringing his son with him; this was a great joy to Sergius.

There were so many monks now that they needed someone to direct them and to be the head of the community; of course they wanted Sergius. He did not want to be the abbot of a monastery, for he was happier doing his daily work and giving his time to prayer and meditation, but the Metropolitan persuaded him that it was his duty and he obeyed. Large buildings were raised where the monks could live and eat together; a church was built and the land was cleared around the settlement. Then peasants began to build their cabins and villages around it and finally roads were made through the forests and many people came there on pilgrimage or to ask the advice of the wise abbot.

One day a peasant came to the monastery. "Where is Sergius?" he asked the monk who let him in. "Where is that holy and famous man? I have come to see him." The monk led him to a window and showed him the abbot who, in a shabby gown, was hoeing the garden. The peasant was shocked. "I came to see a prophet," he said, "and you show me a needy beggar. I do not believe that is Sergius." The monk went out to the garden and told the abbot about the peasant. "He is rude and ignorant," he said, "I will send him away." "No," answered Sergius, "do not send him away. He came to see me, not you; let him have what he wants." So Sergius went into the monastery and prostrated himself before the peasant, as he did to any guest, and offered him food and drink, serving it himself. The peasant still grumbled because he had not seen the holy man. "Do not grieve," said Sergius. "No one ever leaves this monastery with a heavy heart."

While they were sitting there, a prince with his retinue arrived at the gate, with a clashing of swords and armor and the clatter of horses' hoofs. Then the prince and his boyars entered the room and prostrated themselves before the abbot,

while a monk pulled the peasant to one side. "Who is that monk to whom they are paying such honor?" he whispered awe-struck, as the truth began to dawn upon him. "It is the abbot Sergius, blockhead!" the monk replied as he showed the peasant out.

As long as he lived Sergius remained humble, no matter what honor and worship were given to him. He always wore his shabby dress and worked hard with his hands; he always traveled on foot and he traveled far. Once he walked to Rostov to make peace between that city and Moscow; he must have remembered the time when his father was driven from his home in a former quarrel between the two cities. He walked to Nizhni Novgorod, at the junction of the Volga and the Oka rivers, to make peace between two brothers, and again to Riazan on a mission of peace. He walked to Moscow at the behest of the Metropolitan, who was near to death and wanted Sergius to succeed him. But Sergius was firm on this point; he would not be head of the Church; he would not leave his beloved monastery of the Troitsa, the Holy Trinity. He remained there and was known for his holiness even in Byzantium, where the Emperor said of him, "How can such a light have appeared in this savage land, especially in these days?"

The monastery grew and brought added importance to Moscow, for it was in the province belonging to that city. The hungry and the sick were never turned away from its gate; old people came to it to end their days in peace within its walls, and many a boyar, tired of war or crippled with wounds, came to put on the robe of a monk. The men who had first come to join Sergius were ready now to go out and found other monasteries. One day when Sergius was praying he heard a voice call his name and there seemed to be a great light all about him. "Behold the monks who have gone forth in the name of the Holy Trinity," the same voice said, and Sergius, looking out, saw great flocks of birds flying off in all directions.

The monks, like the peasants, went out into the north and the

east, where there was cold and hardship, but also peace. They hewed cabins and little churches in the wilderness and the peasants, moving on into new land, found them and settled round them.

Dmitri of the Don

WHILE SERGIUS was living in the forest by himself, Ivan Kalita died. His two sons ruled after him, one for twelve and the other for seven years; both of them were peaceful men who followed the example of their father. They never sought war but fought when they had to; they strengthened their own city and province and kept the leadership of Russia in their own hands in spite of powerful enemies. The Princes of Moscow are called the "gatherers of the Russian land."

The Golden Horde was still master of Russia; detachments of a thousand or of ten thousand fierce horsemen could still be sent to punish any town or province for disobedience. And in the west there was another and a greater danger, from Lithuania. Gedimin's son increased his father's kingdom and wanted to add to it the whole of Russia, as well as the western and southern provinces which he already held. These were Lithuania's great days and in Gedimin's son they had a great leader. He married the sister of the Prince of Tver; therefore Tver, whose feud with Moscow always smoldered, ready to burst into flame at a breath, was strengthened by this alliance and was a far more dangerous foe than before. Novgorod, independent and fickle, could not be counted on. Moscow seemed very small, in a very dangerous world.

Kalita's second son, Ivan II, died after seven years of rule, leaving a son named Dmitri, who was still a boy. There was trouble in the Golden Horde at this time, and before Dmitri could go to Sarai to get the yarlik, the Prince of Suzdal had set himself up as Grand Prince at Vladimir. Dmitri started his life as a warrior at twelve years of age. Clad in mail, a sword at his

side, with his brother and cousin, both younger than he, he led his army against the Prince of Suzdal. He was supported by faithful and strong boyars, some of whom had served Ivan Kalita and his two sons; they saw that no harm came to him and were wise and helpful counsellors. The Prince of Suzdal was defeated and later became a faithful ally of Dmitri.

There was hardly a year of peace, however, in Dmitri's reign. His boyars, foreseeing this, advised him to replace the wooden and earthen walls of Moscow with a kremlin of stone. This would not have been allowed in Batu's or Uzbek's time, but the Tartars could be flouted now and the stone walls were built on the hill above the Moskva River, enclosing the Prince's palace, the government buildings and several churches. Their protecting strength was soon needed, for the Lithuanians attacked Moscow in 1368. They could not get inside the Kremlin, but they burned all the houses that were built outside its walls and devastated the countryside. Only two years later a five-year war with Tver began, a continuation of the old feud. This time Tver got help from both Lithuania and the Horde; but the stone walls of Moscow protected it again from all these enemies. They burned the outer city and retreated. Dmitri's domain was small compared to Lithuania but he held his own, even a third time, against its armies.

This impressed the other princes and they began to see, at last, that by uniting, even if they had to accept the leadership of Moscow, they might still save their country and their Church, whereas if they went on quarreling, one of their two powerful neighbors would conquer them for good. As the war with Tver went on, Novgorod supported Moscow, as several other princes did, while neither the Tartars nor the Lithuanians sent help to Tver, which was obviously losing the battle. Tver finally surrendered and promised to help Moscow even against its former allies, Lithuania and the Horde. "If the Mongols attack any prince," the treaty said, "we are all to resist. If the Grand Prince

of Moscow moves against the Horde, the Prince of Tver will go with him."

If the Grand Prince moves against the Horde! Here is a new idea indeed!

A new and powerful leader, Mamai, was now in command of the Horde. He had not helped Tver, but he was angry with Dmitri for daring to fight against any ally of his and he did not like the growing power of Moscow. He sent an army to Nizhni Novgorod, whose prince was Dmitri's friend. The Tartars burned the city and ravaged the country. "Why did you help Moscow and march against Tver?" they asked as they killed the Russian warriors. Dmitri sent help to Nizhni Novgorod and he also punished mercilessly some of the pagan people who lived in the wilderness beyond and who had helped the Tartars. Mamai was still more angry at this. He sent a vast army, under one of his best generals, into the north; but this time Dmitri summoned all the princes who were faithful to him. Nizhni Novgorod and Tver, Riazan and Serpukhov sent help; the army marched southward to meet the Tartars, for Russian spies in Sarai had told Dmitri in what direction they were moving.

In August, 1378, the two armies met on opposite sides of a little river not far from the city of Riazan. The Mongols, confident, were the first to cross the river, not meaning to fight immediately but merely to set up their camp. The Russians, however, fell upon them as soon as they crossed, defeated them and drove them back into the river, where many of them were drowned. The leader was killed and the rest fled, leaving their baggage strewn behind them. Dmitri, standing triumphant on the field, cried, "Their time is past — God is now with us!"

Here, the first time in one hundred and thirty years, was open defiance of the Tartars, with no later apologies! And Mamai was no weakling, but one of the strongest leaders the Horde had ever had. For two years he prepared his revenge. In 1380 he

boasted that he had half a million men, Tartars and Turks, Armenians, and even a regiment of Genoese from the Black Sea ports. "We need supplies for the winter," he said to his warriors. "We shall get them in Moscow."

Dmitri knew all about this army from his spies. He knew, too, that the Prince of Riazan was a traitor and had persuaded the Lithuanian leader to bring all his forces to join Mamai. Dmitri summoned the warriors of Novgorod and Pskov, who came willingly; Tver sent an army and so did Nizhni Novgorod; Dmitri's faithful cousin, Vladimir of Serpukhov, came with all his men. Yet the decision to fight was a very hard one to make. Everyone knew what Tartar victory meant; for Dmitri it would also mean losing everything that his father and his ancestors had worked and fought for during a century's time. He could not decide alone and therefore sought the best judgment in Russia: he rode up through the forests to see Sergius at the Holy Trinity monastery.

Sergius was a man of peace; once when a monk had questioned his authority, he had left the monastery and gone into the wilderness again rather than have any quarrel. But he was a monk and Dmitri was the ruler of a state. "You must care for the lives of the flock that God has committed to your care," he told the prince. "Go forth against the heathen and do not fear, for God will help you." Among the monks were two men who had been boyars and great warriors. Sergius sent these two with Dmitri, who went back to his army resolute and comforted.

The army assembled in late August at Kolomna on the Oka, for Dmitri had heard that the Tartars and the Lithuanians were to meet in September on the Oka and he wished to prevent that meeting. He then marched south to the upper Don and encamped there on September 6th, 1380. Then another question arose: should they wait for the Tartars and let them cross the river, as they had done before, or should they cross first and attack the oncoming army? Dmitri wanted to cross. "I have not come here," he said, "to wait for Tartars or to watch the Don."

While they were discussing the question, a message came to Dmitri from Sergius, "Do not doubt; go forward with faith, for God is on your side."

The Russians found a ford and crossed the Don. It is said that there were a hundred and fifty thousand of them. They chose their camp, along a little river that ran into the Don, near a wood. Before them was a wide, rolling plain, known as Kulikovo, or the Field of Snipes. The Tartars, because of their enormous numbers, liked to surround an enemy; they could not do that here. Neither could the Russians retreat, for the river bank was steep and there was no ford behind them. It was not the last time that Russians were to have their backs against a river.

The day after they encamped they knew that the Tartar host was approaching: by laying their ears against the ground they could feel the vibrations of thousands of hoofs striking the earth. As they waited, the warriors realized the solemnity of the moment; Dmitri rode through the army, speaking aloud the Psalm, "God is our refuge and our strength," and the whole army sang one of the splendid hymns of the Church.

The thunder of hoofs was now heard by everyone; the mighty Horde appeared over the rise of ground and assembled in battle array. Then, yelling, under a cloud of arrows, it hurled itself on the Russians while Mamai, on a hilltop, directed the attack. For three hours wave after wave of horsemen broke against the Russian ranks, and at last their very weight began to drive the center back. The center gave way and the Tartars, yelling with triumph, rushed in. But the Russians had learned how to fight the Tartar way; all this time Dmitri's cousin Vladimir had held a strong detachment in ambush behind the wood. Now they rushed forward and attacked the Tartar rear while the right and left flanks of the main army closed in also and surrounded the enemy.

This decided the battle. The Tartars turned and fled; Mamai saw hundreds, then thousands, of his horsemen thunder past

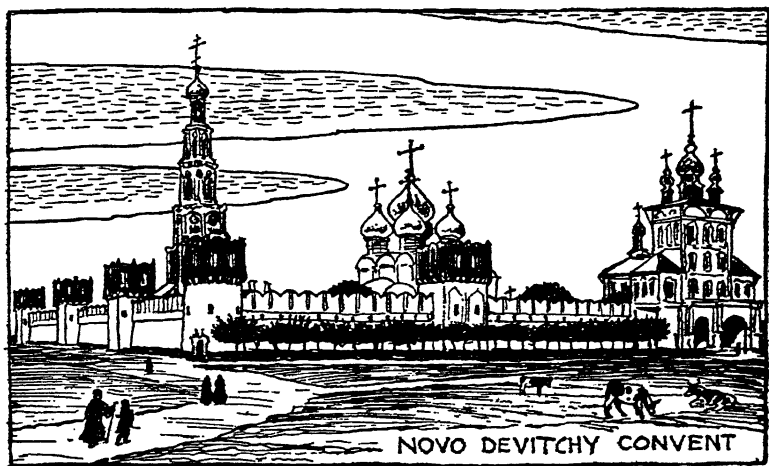
him. He joined them and fled into the night before Vladimir's men.

The Russians, wounded and exhausted, could hardly believe their victory. "Where is the Grand Prince?" they cried. But no one had seen Dmitri for hours. They searched for him everywhere and finally found him lying under a tree, unconscious and bleeding. He came to his senses to hear the glorious news of Mamai's flight; he lived but never recovered completely from his wounds. The two monks from the Holy Trinity and countless boyars and warriors lay dead on the field.

The victory at Kulikovo was a turning point in Russia's history, although the Tartar yoke was not yet lifted. But now the Horde were no longer invincible; their full force had been met and defeated. Dmitri, like his ancestor Alexander, was given the name of a river — Dmitri Donskoi — and his cousin was called Vladimir the Brave. Every year the anniversary of the battle was celebrated. Moscow was the recognized leader of Russia.

But Moscow paid heavily for victory. It happened that a Tartar leader nearly as powerful as Jenghis arose at this time — Tamerlane, whose capital city was Samarkand. He drove Mamai out and sent one of his generals to punish Moscow. Dmitri was unprepared; he left the city to get help from other princes; the Metropolitan fled and the city was left to a few boyars and its citizens. The stone walls withstood the Tartars but Russian traitors opened the gates; Moscow was sacked and burned and tens of thousands of people were slaughtered. When Dmitri came back to his ruined capital he wept and said, "Our fathers, who never defeated the Tartars, were happier than we!"

Nevertheless, although it was another hundred years before the yoke was lifted, the Horde were never feared or obeyed as they had been before Kulikovo.



CHAPTER VIII

THE GRAND PRINCE BECOMES TSAR

The Cossacks

MAMAI WAS THE last great leader of the Golden Horde. After Tamerlane drove him out, the empire of Batu began to fall to pieces. The obedience and discipline enforced by Jenghis Khan had long since vanished; there were quarrels and murders at Sarai. Finally the Tartars divided into three groups: those who called themselves the Golden Horde remained near Sarai but made Astrakhan, at the Volga's mouth, their capital; others moved up to Kazan, on the upper Volga; a powerful horde settled on the Crimean Peninsula, from which stronghold they ravaged southern Russia for several centuries.

The Russians ventured out on the steppe again; the vast prairie became a sort of no-man's land, a fighting ground, as it had been in the early days of Rus, but worse than it had been then, for there were more Tartars and more Russians invading it from all sides.

There were no borders between the two peoples. The only Russian border was their line of frontier troops: these soldiers had long lines of wooden fences or palisades, called a "walking city," which they set in the earth, digging a ditch in front of them and throwing the earth against the posts of the fence to strengthen them. This was the only defense they had against their most persistent enemies; if they won a battle, the walking city moved farther out on to the steppe; if they lost, it moved farther back. At intervals along this moving fortress there were stations where garrisons were kept all the time, and as soon as spring came, thousands more men were sent out to man the frontier and to watch for Tartar bands. Scouts were placed along it a day's ride apart; their horses were always saddled, and watch was kept day and night for any moving dot on the wide horizon or any wisp of smoke. If the enemy was sighted, a scout mounted and rode at full speed to the next station where, as soon as he came in sight, another man galloped off. So, from one station to another, the alarm was sent until it reached a garrison and summoned all the available soldiers.

This wavering frontier lay as far south of the Oka River as it could be kept. To the west, the Poles did very much the same thing; the land around and south of Kiev, belonging now to Poland, was known as Ukraine, the borderland.

Beyond these guarded lines, however, bands of men roamed the steppe, looking for adventure, for freedom or for piracy. There are always men who love frontiers and there was never a more dangerous or tempting frontier than this one, which was open for centuries to anyone brave and tough enough to survive upon it. These men were known as Kazaks or Cossacks, which means free lance or freebooter.

Rumors of the richness of the soil of the steppe reached the farmers of the southern provinces of Russia and Poland. One sowing yielded two or three crops, it was said; if you left your plow in the field for a day or two it would be lost in the abundant grass; if you thrust a stick into the river it would

stand upright, held fast in the mass of fish; while honey fairly flowed out of the ground, stored there by the bees that fed on the multitudes of flowers. Farmers who were tired of paying rent and taxes ventured out on to the steppe, where they had to become Cossacks or live near a Cossack settlement for protection; for they were living on a battleground.

Every year, in the spring and again at harvesttime, the Tartars raided. Tens of thousands of horsemen moved northward, hidden by the tall grasses, riding up the shallow ravines worn in the steppe by the melting snows that find their way to the rivers. The raiders carried paniers at their saddles to hold Russian children and leather thongs to bind men and women. They fed the slave markets of the Black and Caspian seaports with Polish and Russian captives.

The Cossacks fought against these raiders in every way they could. If the Tartars were few, they attacked them openly; if there were too many, they harassed them, stole their supplies, drove off their animals or lay in wait for them on their return and stole their booty from them. They were as hardy as the Tartars, lived like them on horseback, and were accustomed to every sort of hardship. When the Tartars did not attack, the Cossacks did; they raided villages, stole horses and cattle and attacked towns when they were able. They built light swift boats and went down the rivers as far as the Black Sea. The warfare was merciless; death, torture or slavery was the certain result of defeat. When an attack was to be made, a proclamation was sent out to the scattered bands: "Let him who is willing to be impaled, broken on the wheel, torn to pieces for the Christian faith; let him who is willing to suffer every torture, who is not afraid to die, come with us!"

Although many different kinds of men were admitted to them, the Cossack settlements were Orthodox; they were Christians fighting the infidel. It is said that the only question asked of a new member was, "Do you believe in the Holy Orthodox faith?" "Yes." "Cross yourself!" And if he crossed himself

properly, with the thumb touching the first two fingers of the right hand, he was admitted.

Some Cossacks, especially those who had come to farm the steppe, lived in villages where the women, strong and hardy as the men, did the work of the fields while the men fought; some roamed the steppe like Tartars, living in yurts, keeping sheep and cattle. They stayed by the big rivers and took their names from them; they were known as the Don, the Volga or the Yaik Cossacks.

The most famous settlement was that of the Zaporogians whose name comes from "za porog," which means "below the rapids." They lived on an island below the rapids of the Dnieper, where the river separates into several marshy streams and many islands, covered with low woods or scrub, rise above the water. They built a settlement where no women were allowed; the men lived by companies in barracks, each one of which had its elected headman. The whole community met in the open (as the *vieche* did in the town and the *mir* in the village) and elected a headman for the whole band, who ruled it for a year, or until he was thrown out by the assembly. The headman had little authority in times of idleness; he was no more than a chairman; but as soon as war was decided on, his every word was obeyed without question, for every man knew that his life depended on the obedience and discipline of the whole troop. There was complete equality and democracy among them. All Cossack bands, however they lived, governed themselves this way.

More and more men joined the different bands until they numbered tens of thousands of men. Runaway peasants, penniless nobles, sons of priests, workmen from the cities, Russians, Poles, Germans, Tartars — a motley crowd gathered on the steppe, and everyone was welcome if he was strong and brave and loyal to his comrades. There, at least, a man was free, for the Cossacks paid no taxes and obeyed no man but their elected leader.

They were feared by the Russians as well as the Tartars, for if they had nothing better to do they raided merchant ships going down the rivers to the Tartar ports; but they were the best defenders that a frontier could have and they were left to their lawless ways.

Russia had need of defenders, for, although the Tartars were weaker than they had been, two other neighbors were dangerously strong. Lithuania had powerful leaders, the descendants of Gedimin, who conquered more Russian land and pressed hard against the western borders of Moscow. Shortly after the death of Dmitri Donskoi, the Grand Prince of Lithuania married the beautiful young Queen of Poland, Jadwiga, and the two countries were united. The Lithuanians were converted to Catholicism by this happy event as they never had been by the cruelty of the Teutonic Knights. It made life much harder, however, for all the Russians who lived in Lithuania; for Roman Catholics and Orthodox could never live peaceably together and the former were favored in every possible way. Besides wanting to get back the White Russian and Little Russian lands, the Grand Princes considered themselves the protectors of the Orthodox people in Poland and Lithuania and this did not better relations along the borders.

A still more momentous event, which had far-reaching effects on Russia, took place farther south, at the very source of its culture and religion. In 1453 Byzantium was taken by the Turks. The last Emperor died fighting heroically on the walls of the imperial city; its houses and markets, already poorer than in the days of its glory, were sacked, and its people driven into slavery. St. Sophia became a Turkish mosque; its golden and many-colored mosaics were covered with plaster and the Moslems spread their prayer rugs on its marble pavements. For over a thousand years Byzantium had been a center of civilization and commerce for the eastern Mediterranean lands; it had been an outpost of Christian and Greek culture at the very edge of Europe, facing the oncoming flood of Turkish conquest. Now

that flood had submerged it; it was the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

The shock of this conquest made Europe tremble with fear of the Turks. Russia was too far away to fear direct attack, but the Crimean Tartars became vassals of the Sultan of Turkey and their raids were backed by his powerful army and his navy, which had the sole right to sail the Black Sea.

Only the Cossacks were impudent enough to defy the Sultan. Their swift little boats slipped silently out of the reeds of the rivers at night and surrounded a Turkish galley before its sleeping guards were aware; they boarded it, robbed and vanished again. They went down the coasts as far as the suburbs of the great city; they landed, raided and were gone. Once, in answer to a message from the Sultan, the Zaporogians, crowding about their ataman, or headman, who knew how to write, dictated this letter to the Sultan, carefully choosing the insults that would most offend his Mohammedan faith:

"Thou Turkish Devil; brother and companion of Lucifer himself; who dares to call himself lord of the Christians but is not! Babylonish cook! Brewer of Jerusalem! Goat-keeper of the herds of Alexandria; swineherd of Great and Lesser Egypt! Insolent unbeliever: may the Devil take you! The Cossacks refuse every demand and petition that you now make to them or that you may in the future invent. Thank us for condescending to answer you!

Ivan Sirko, ataman (for the whole community)"

One of the most powerful Turkish sultans said that the thought of the Cossacks kept him awake at night. But the Grand Princes in Moscow slept better because of them.

Ivan the Great

THE GRAND Princes of Moscow inherited, from father to son, the idea of a strong, centralized government; they believed in

it passionately and held to it stubbornly in the face of all opposition. They knew that it could never be realized while the old order of inheritance, from brother to brother, continued, with the quarrels and fights that always accompanied it. They were determined that the inheritance should go from father to eldest son. When Dmitri Donskoi died, as he did four years after Kulikovo, his cousin, Vladimir the Brave, who might have claimed the throne, stood aside, with rare nobility, in favor of Dmitri's son. One more brothers' quarrel broke out during the reign of Dmitri's grandson, but after that the throne went, whenever possible, from father to eldest son. The wisdom of this arrangement can easily be seen in the length of the reigns of these later princes: Dmitri Donskoi reigned twenty-one years; his son Vasili I forty-one years; Vasili II thirty-seven years and *his* son forty-three years. These long reigns gave more strength and steadiness to Moscow than the short reigns of seven or eight years gave to the Rus of Kiev.

These princes followed the example of their ancestors: they kept their precarious stand between the Tartars and Poland and added to the territory of Moscow. When the second Vasili died in 1462, Moscow reached northward as far as the Sukhona River, which flows into the northern Dvina, beyond Nizhni Novgorod on the east, and on the south to the upper reaches of the Don. Nevertheless, *inside* these borders, Riazan remained rebellious and often treacherous, and Rostov kept its own princes. On the west, Tver was as hostile as Lithuania, while the Great Novgorod and its "younger brother" Pskov were independent republics.

During the reign of the second Vasili a ragged monk came to the archbishop of Novgorod. "There is great joy in Moscow today," he said. "And why?" asked the archbishop. "A fair son has been born to the Grand Prince," answered the old man. "He will be famous and will subdue princes and people; but alas for us! Novgorod will fall at his feet, never to rise again." This child became Grand Prince in 1462, when he was twenty-

two years old; he was the third Ivan and is known as Ivan the Great.

When he came to the throne, Novgorod was defiant to the young Grand Prince; it claimed some land that had formerly been yielded to his father. Ivan surprised the city by promptly marching against it. The *vieche* was divided, as usual; some citizens shouted for the Grand Prince while others cried, "Let us get help from Poland! The Grand Prince will take away our liberty!" The Polish party, led by a woman, prevailed; Novgorod offered its allegiance to Poland in return for help against the Prince of Moscow. This put a strong weapon into Ivan's hands, for he could rally the religious feeling of the other princes to his side by denouncing Novgorod for giving itself over to a Catholic king. Tver and Pskov supported him, while the King of Poland, in spite of the great advantage offered to him, did nothing to help Novgorod. Ivan's troops advanced, ravaging the country. Food no longer reached the city; the *vieche* still rioted, as many men wanted to accept the rule of Moscow. Novgorod had no troops that could face those of Ivan. In 1470 the archbishops and officials of the proud city prostrated themselves before Ivan in his tent and acknowledged him as their lord.

This was not the end of the matter, however. Ivan was not content to have merely the allegiance of Novgorod and the city did not wish to lose any of its liberties. The Grand Prince strengthened the Moscow faction there and stirred up the continual strife between the small people and the great. In 1475 he went with a small retinue to Novgorod, where he was received with great honor, entertained lavishly and given fine presents. He held a court of justice, imprisoned several boyars and ordered certain cases to be taken to Moscow for judgment. Then he returned to his capital.

This threw Novgorod into a ferment of excitement. No citizen had ever been judged or imprisoned outside of his own

city. "Novgorod is its own judge!" they cried, and begged Ivan to set their boyars free. While the envoys were going back and forth between the two cities it happened, whether by intent or by mistake, that some men of Novgorod addressed Ivan as "sovereign" instead of "lord," as the Grand Prince was usually called. Ivan did not miss his chance. "Does Novgorod recognize me as its sovereign?" he asked. "Then let the palace of Yaroslav be prepared for my governor instead of the fortress." There were riots again in the city; princes and governors had always been outsiders; they were merely military leaders and had lived in the fortress, never in the heart of the city. After many meetings the *vieche* sent its answer. "We pay homage to you as our lord but not as our sovereign. We cannot let your governors live in Yaroslav's palace nor interfere in our affairs."

Then Ivan declared war and called on all the princes to bring their armies. In November he marched northward and surrounded the city, occupying the monasteries and the suburbs that encircled it, forcing the people to feed his soldiers. Within two weeks the archbishop and the city officials came to sue for peace, acknowledging Ivan as their sovereign and begging for mercy. They offered to pay yearly tribute to him but begged that he would leave them their courts of justice and that he would not ask them to serve him outside of their own territory. "What!" he cried angrily. "You will teach me how to rule you?" They prostrated themselves again. "Tell us how you will rule us," they answered. "I wish to rule here as I do in Moscow," said Ivan. "You must give up your elected governor and take down the bell that calls your citizens to the *vieche*."

For eight days the citizens of Novgorod talked and wept and talked again. They had no food and illness was increasing. At the end of December the city surrendered; in January Yaroslav's palace was prepared for Ivan and the bell was taken down from Yaroslav's Tower. The Grand Prince entered the gates and heard mass in St. Sophia; the last food and wine was set before him at a banquet. Ivan was gracious but stern; there was no

doubt in the minds of the assembled guests that hereafter there was but one authority in the Russian land. When Ivan left, the bell of the *vieche*, "the Voice of Lord Novgorod the Great," followed him over the snow on a sledge. It was hung, later, in Moscow, in the belfry of the tower that bears his name.

Now that the territory of Novgorod, reaching to the Gulf of Finland and to the Arctic Ocean, was his, Ivan found himself no longer the prince of a province shut in on all sides by enemies and by other princes, but the ruler of a nation bordered by other nations, a land that could breathe freely and take part in the affairs of the world. Soon after the conquest of Novgorod, the long feud with Tver was ended when its prince fled and Ivan entered its capital. The princes of Rostov and Yaroslavl yielded their provinces to him and Riazan was friendly. Except for the Tartar yoke, he was in the position of Vladimir or of Yaroslav, who ruled the Russian land and married their daughters to the kings of Europe.

Ivan's first wife died while he was still young; he imitated his ancestors and looked abroad for another wife. There was, in Rome, a niece of the last Emperor of Byzantium; she was said to be very beautiful and intelligent. What could be more fitting than the marriage of the Grand Prince of Russia with a Princess of Byzantium? It was arranged; and the Princess Sophia, like the Princess Anna long ago, set out with a great train of courtiers and ladies for her new home. She came, however, by a very different route and for good reasons. Starting from Rome, she went north to the German port of Lübeck, thence by boat to Reval, where she was escorted by the Teutonic Knights to the shores of Lake Peipus; there at last she was met with great ceremony by the Russian officials of Pskov. Thence, via Novgorod, she went to Moscow and, in November, was married to Ivan with all the pomp and beauty of the Orthodox Church.

This marriage was very important to Ivan and to Russia. Ever since Byzantium had fallen and the head of the Orthodox

Church was at the mercy of the Turkish Sultan, the Russians had realized, with a sense of solemn responsibility, that their Church and their Grand Prince were now the only guardians of the true faith. Ivan felt himself to be the heir of the emperors and Sophia strengthened this feeling in him. She never forgot her imperial birth or the glory of her uncle's court; she looked contemptuously at her husband's low-ceilinged wooden palace and urged him to live with greater majesty. She and the Greek courtiers and scholars who came with her thought of a ruler as the worshipped head of the Church and state, whose word was law, before whom his subjects touched their foreheads to the ground. Ivan had much the same idea; but what majesty could he have when he still might have to prostrate himself before a Tartar khan? Sophia urged him to cast off the yoke. "How long must I be a slave of the Tartars?" she asked. "My father and I lost all that we had rather than live under Turkish rule."

The Golden Horde, much smaller than it had been, was between the two rival hordes of Kazan and the Crimea and was often at war with them. Ivan sent gifts to the Khan and was courteous to him but paid no tribute. He made a strong alliance with the Khan of the Crimea, thus forming a broad barrier between his two enemies, the Golden Horde and Poland. A few years after his marriage, the Khan of the Golden Horde sent envoys ordering him to come to Sarai; Ivan sent gifts but he did not go. In 1478 the Khan sent again, demanding tribute. Instead of going out of the gates and kneeling to receive the messengers of the Khan, as former princes had done, Ivan had them brought before him. He took the image of the Khan and threw it on the ground, stamping on it in his rage. He had all but one of the envoys killed and sent that one back with the message, "Tell your master what you have seen! Tell him that if he troubles me again the same thing will happen to him!"

The Khan, of course, declared war and planned with the King of Poland that they invade Russia from both sides. Ivan's

friend, the Crimean Khan, prevented this by attacking Poland and keeping its army busy. The Tartar invasion ended in a curious way.

The two armies, Tartar and Russian, met at the river Ugra, just as similar armies had met on the Don, a hundred years before in Dmitri's day. This time, however, neither crossed the river. For weeks they faced each other, occasionally sending a flight of arrows, a boast or an insult across the water. It was late autumn; at the end of October the river began to freeze and soon formed a bridge rather than a barrier between the enemies. When the ice was solid Ivan ordered his forces to retire to a better position; a sort of panic seized them and they made a disorderly and hasty retreat. But the Tartars suspected a trick; the same panic seized them and they turned and fled, stopping only to ravage some Lithuanian towns in revenge for the failure of the Polish king to help them.

In this inglorious way the Tartar yoke, which had borne so heavily for two hundred and fifty years on Russian shoulders, dropped off and was never felt again.

After that Ivan no longer signed himself "Grand Prince of Vladimir, Moscow, etc. and all the Russias," but "Tsar of all the Russias." Tsar was a word commonly used for any monarch or sovereign; Tartar khans were often called tsars. The word came from Caesar, the proud title of the Roman and Byzantine emperors. Ivan also took the symbol of the Byzantine emperors — the double-headed eagle that looks toward Europe and toward Asia — for the arms of his free nation. The Church, which could no longer depend on the Patriarch of Byzantium, hailed him as its head, as the one truly Christian monarch. The Rome of Caesar and the second Rome, Byzantium, had both fallen. "Now Moscow is the third Rome," said the priests, "and there shall not be a fourth."

Ivan wanted to build a city worthy of this proud title. The cathedral built by his ancestor Kalita was shaky after Tartar devastation and several fires; the century-old walls of Dmitri

Donskoi needed to be enlarged. Ivan's builders pulled down the old cathedral and raised a new one, but it was hardly finished before it fell, with a thunder of falling bricks and a cloud of dust. During the centuries of Tartar rule all the energies of the people had been given to holding grimly on to life and land. Much had been destroyed and very little produced. There had been no time for artists; they had forgotten how to build.

Ivan sent for foreign architects and masons. In Europe at this time that great awakening of the mind, called the Renaissance, was taking place. The scholars who fled from Byzantium into Italy took with them the precious manuscripts of Greek philosophy, science, poetry and history, and were welcomed there. New and magnificent arts were being produced, first in Italy and then in the other countries of Europe. A fresh curiosity led men forth on voyages of discovery and exploration, around Africa to Asia, across the Atlantic to America. The Russians, still unused to freedom or security, took little part in this Renaissance, but they profited indirectly by it. Ivan invited architects from Venice, who were wise enough to admire and build Russian churches, not Italian ones. After studying Andrei Bogoliubsky's cathedral in Vladimir, they built a new and beautiful one in Moscow, which still stands there, several other churches and a fine hall with a high throne where Ivan could receive foreign ambassadors as the Byzantine emperors used to do. He had a brick palace built for himself and Sophia and their many children, and many wealthy citizens built houses of brick. The splendid walls that now surround the Kremlin were also raised then. Italian metalworkers made cannons and bells and taught Russian workmen how to make them. Sophia taught the stern Tsar the ceremonies of the Byzantine court and insisted upon richness in dress and formality in behavior.

Even so, in his fine capital, free of the Tartars, possessed of more land and power than any Prince of Moscow had ever had, Ivan was not content. All the Russias meant to him White Russia and Little Russia, the patrimony of his ancestors Yaro-

slav and Monomakh. He longed to free the ancient territory of Rus — Kiev, Galicia, Chernigov, Smolensk, and Polotsk — from Poland, and to bring the Orthodox Russians who lived there under his protection. He fought again and again, with the help of the Crimean Tartars, and he won back a great deal of territory east of the Dnieper. "Peace with Lithuania," he said, "can be nothing but a truce, nothing but the drawing of a breath for the gathering of new strength."

He left this warfare to his son, to whom he also left the care and guidance — not of a struggling province — but of a re-born and powerful nation.

The Boyars

NOW THAT Ivan the Great, and his son after him, ruled from the steppe to the White Sea, Tsars of all Russia, what had become of the innumerable princes of the House of Rurik, who had once ruled provinces and cities, each supreme in his own domain?

They had become the generals, the councillors, the governors and the courtiers of the Tsar. Some he kept near him in Moscow; they formed the Council of Boyars whom he consulted as the ancient princes had consulted their *druzhina*. Others he sent to govern cities and provinces and many others led his armies. No longer did the princes pick quarrels with each other, devastate each other's land and besiege each other's towns; they were now part of a united army, ready to fight on the eastern, southern or western border of the nation in order to preserve its life; they were part of a government whose supreme head was the Tsar, in whose presence they prostrated themselves as they had once done before the Tartar khans.

Since they no longer ruled their provinces, taking its revenues for themselves, the Tsar must pay them for their services. He paid them partly in money; but since there were a great many of them, he paid them mostly in land, which he had in abun-

dance. The confiscated lands of princes or those of Novgorod and Pskov, lands conquered from the Tartars or the Lithuanians, vast stretches of wilderness were his to give, and they were given to princes, to boyars and to any able and brave men who would fight for him. Tartar chieftains, who had quarreled with their khan or who, perhaps, preferred Russia to their own land, sometimes accepted the Orthodox faith and a grant of land in return for military service. The Tsar needed hundreds of thousands of men whom he could call upon in case of sudden war or to man the thousands of miles of disputed borderland. He gave land in return for service; the owner paid no taxes but was bound to present himself, mounted, armed and supplied with everything that he would need, when he was called; if much land was given to him, he must also bring a certain number of armed and mounted soldiers with him. Land was also given in return for government service or attendance at court. All these men were called servitors of the state; they were not of the old nobility, as the boyars were, but rather a landed gentry.

Land, of course, was of no use to anyone if it was not cultivated. There were often villages and scattered peasant households on it when it was given and these were taken over by the new owners; otherwise the owner did his best to bring farmers to it by offering to provide them with animals and tools, to be paid for later. The landowner served the Tsar; the peasant served the landowner, paying him rent in food, money or labor and so supporting him. He made a contract with his landlord, agreeing to stay and to pay so much rent until a stated time or until he had paid any debts that he owed the landlord. When that was done he was free to move or to stay, as he liked; he was often offered pleasanter conditions by some neighboring landowner who needed his labor, or by a monastery, for labor was in great demand. Or he could move into land belonging to the state, where he paid his taxes to the state and nothing

more. He could do anything but own the land that he plowed, for land was owned only by the Tsar, the Church and the servitors of the Tsar.

The princes and great boyars lived in as great comfort as the land and climate could afford; they had many household slaves and plenty of food and drink, both of which they enjoyed. Their houses, firmly built of logs of pine or spruce, were dry and warm, for there were stoves in every house, large or small, and plenty of wood for fuel. The boyar never went out except on horseback or in a sleigh, attended by grooms and footmen.

His dress was splendid, as the dress of the wealthy was almost everywhere at that time, and especially in the East, with which Russia had always had closer contact than with the West. He wore linen breeches and a fine embroidered shirt of silk or linen; over that a silk garment that came to the knees, with buttons of gold or silver; this, with his high boots of fine red or yellow leather, often embroidered with pearls, might be enough for summer. At other seasons, he wore over these clothes a fine coat, ankle-long, called a caftan, fastened with handsome buttons and bound by a girdle into which he thrust his knife and a spoon; over that another long coat, lined or trimmed with the finest fur he could afford. For state occasions this coat was made of cloth of gold and ornamented with jewels, and around his neck the boyar wore a jeweled collar three or four fingers wide. For outdoor wear there was still another fur-lined coat, until his body, usually burly with good food and drink, was imposingly broad. His hair was cut very short although his beard was never cut nor shaved, for he took great pride in it; he wore a skullcap made of fine stuffs and jeweled; over that a tall hat in the Persian style with a broad border of black fox fur, if he could afford it, otherwise of less precious fur.

His horse was gayly decorated with a bridle decked with gold and a silver fringe, while the saddle was covered with velvet or

cloth of gold, bound with gold or silver. When he went to battle he wore a fine suit of mail and over it a rich mantle.

The costume of the women was as complicated as that of the men; the beautiful and simple Byzantine dress had been forgotten and one garment was laid on another until the figure looked more like a bell than like a woman. The woman, however, could not display her magnificence in public as her husband could, for she spent her life shut up in the *terem*, the women's part of the house, which was usually in the upper storey. This custom, too, came from Byzantium and unfortunately had not been forgotten. Surrounded by her slaves, the boyar's wife ran her household, supervised all its labors, did fine embroidery, and was no freer than a Turkish woman. Large houses had their own chapels and their priests, so she did not even go to church, except on the great festivals and then in a closed sleigh or carriage. She took no part in her husband's feasts except on very ceremonious occasions, when, dressed in her best, her face thickly painted, she appeared briefly to offer each guest a cup of wine and to receive from him a respectful kiss. The daughters of a Tsar were the most unfortunate of women, for, since Russia was cut off from the West by the Tartar conquest and by religious difference, there were no more marriages between the Russian ruling family and those of Europe, and no boyar's son was considered worthy of a Tsar's daughter; therefore the *terem* or the convent was the fate, for several centuries more, of the girls whose birth should have brought them fine marriages and interesting lives.

There were, in Russia, none of the graces, the pleasures or the arts that were flourishing in other parts of the world when Ivan the Great died. In China, the workmen of the Ming Dynasty, which had long before driven the Tartar conquerors out, were amazing European travelers with their exquisite wares, while artists and poets delighted the court of the emperor and the homes of the citizens. In India the Great Moguls, descend-

ants of the Mongol Tartars, were soon to raise in Hindustan the mosques and palaces that are still among the world's most lovely buildings. In western Europe the Renaissance had filled the minds and hearts of men with new life and joy: in Italy Michelangelo and Raphael were young; in England and France poets were giving beauty for beauty and genius was in bud; from every port high-pooped, square-sailed little ships went gallantly forth on desperate adventures.

But still, in Russia, survival was enough; the time of deadly danger was still well-remembered. The five long months of winter, when earth and water lay mute under their thick covering of snow and ice may also have quieted the spirit. The Great Schism and the difference of language which separated them from the West kept the Russians from sharing the intellectual joys of western Europe, while the wide stretches of Tartar-dominated steppe, the deserts and high mountains shut them out from the civilized parts of Asia. The Turk, hateful to them because of his Mohammedan faith, held Byzantium. The Church, which in other parts of Europe had cherished learning and given birth to all the arts, in Russia discouraged learning and condemned all art except what could be used in churches, and bound even that to ancient forms which every artist must copy. Dancing and singing, even storytelling and games, were frowned upon by monks and priests; they held rigidly to the early religion that they had learned in Byzantium as if afraid that any new idea might turn them from the true faith of which they were now the only guardians.

Pleasures, therefore, were mostly coarse and material, while the natural and abundant artistic gifts of the people were suppressed, until the dances and the folk tales of the peasants, which nothing could stop, were about all that was left. Drinking was still, as in Vladimir I's day, the "chief joy of the Russians," rich or poor, and feasting was its companion. The men enjoyed hunting and sports: racing on foot and on horseback, archery, falconry and bear hunting. From Viking days they

had been cruel fighters and the Tartars had taught them far greater cruelty. They loved to watch a fight between a bear and dogs or between a bear and a man, in which the man, as often as not, came off the worse. War was the best outlet for the energy of the boyars and most of them spent a good part of their lives at it.

They were proud men, for many of them, as truly as the Tsar, were descended from Yaroslav and Monomakh and some were descendants of even older branches of the House of Rurik than that in which the Tsars were born. They were not accustomed to obedience, until very recently; if they did not like one prince they were apt to go and attach themselves to another. Quarreling over inheritance was in their blood and not one of them would give place to another whom he considered of lower birth than himself; not one of them would serve, even in war, another man whose father or grandfather had once held a lower position than his own father or grandfather. As the Tsars of Russia gathered more and more power into their hands, these men were a problem to them, for sometimes they helped and sometimes they hindered: they fought nobly, supported and advised the Tsar and ruled his provinces for him; but, if the Tsar were weak or died young, leaving a child on the throne, they might undo all that the Princes of Moscow had built up, and tear the land apart again.

This nearly happened after the death of Ivan the Great's son, the third Vasili, who left a child on the throne. He did not die young, but he married late in life. He had a reign of twenty-eight years and strengthened both Russia and the throne, for he regained Smolensk from Lithuania and took over Riazan and the proud city of Pskov, Novgorod's younger brother.

Pskov was more orderly and peaceful than Novgorod; it was a small republic that carried on a flourishing trade with northern Europe and managed its life and its business very well. But it held a strategic place on the very frontier of Russia; if it quarreled with Moscow it might offer its allegiance to

Lithuania as easily as boyars sometimes changed their leaders. Ivan's son could not allow it to be different from the rest of his territory; as his father had done before him, he demanded the bell, the city's voice, and the end of the *vieche*. The citizens had no choice; with tears they took the bell from its tower and acknowledged the Tsar, who sent his boyars to rule them, moved three hundred of the oldest families to Moscow and sent three hundred families from Moscow to replace them. "Alas," writes the chronicler, "glorious city, Pskov the Great, wherefore these lamentations and these tears?" "How can I but weep and lament?" he makes the city answer. "An eagle, a many-winged eagle, has swooped down upon me and taken captive my beauty, my riches and my children! Our land is a desert, our city destroyed, our trade is ruined; our brothers have been carried away to a place where our fathers never dwelt nor their fathers before them!"

Vasili kept his boyars under his hand, as his father had done; but he had no children until a few years before he died, in 1533. He left two young sons, one three years old and the other a baby. It was the elder of these who was to struggle from the beginning of his life to the end with his boyars.



CHAPTER IX

IVAN THE TERRIBLE

Ivan IV

FOR ABOUT TEN years a high-strung, high-tempered, frightened little boy lived in the Tsar's palace in the Kremlin. He felt conflict and danger on all sides of him, for his beautiful Lithuanian mother, with the help of her family and a prince who was her lover, tried to keep the power in her hands, while his father's brothers tried to get it into their hands and the great boyars took sides in the quarrel. The little boy was the Tsar, the fourth Ivan; no one questioned that, for the inheritance from father to son was now established; but since he would not be able to rule for fifteen years or more, there was a question as to who should rule for him until he came of age. His mother had his father's brothers thrown into prison, where they both died; after three or four years of violence and hatred, she herself was poisoned and Ivan, at eight, was left an orphan in the midst of new quarrels.

Two powerful boyar families now struggled for leadership; the others took sides, eager to regain the possessions that had once been theirs. This was a familiar way of life: the old princely quarrels broke out again as soon as the strong hands of the Tsars of Moscow were for any reason weakened. Both sides were completely selfish; they cared nothing for the welfare of the people or the nation, but simply for their own advantage. Meanwhile the Poles and the Tartars watched with delight and planned to attack Russia when it was weakened by inner strife.

The young Tsar, however, did not accept this relapse into old ways. He inherited his family's conviction that all power must belong to the Tsar and he fretted at his own youth and helplessness. On state occasions he was dressed in gorgeous robes and seated on his father's throne to welcome foreign ambassadors and to receive homage; and the quarreling boyars touched their foreheads to the ground before him. But when the royal robes were laid aside, he and his little brother were left to their nurses in the dark rooms of the palace, and often had not enough to eat or proper clothes to wear, so little did anyone care for them. Ivan learned to read and studied passionately the chronicles of his own country and the books of the Bible which spoke of kings as the "anointed of God."

He was a very intelligent boy; he was affectionate, too, although he was hot-tempered and strong-willed. But his affections were outraged, while all his fears were justified, and he was encouraged to satisfy his temper with cruelty. People whom he trusted were taken away by the boyars who did not want anyone else to have power over him. Once, in the early morning while he was still sleeping, a group of men burst into his bedroom and nearly frightened him to death. They were hunting down the Metropolitan, who had fled to the palace and who, they thought, might have taken refuge with the Tsar. Ivan was taken to executions and to the torture chambers, for that was part of the education of a prince and a warrior; boys were often given a captive bear or a wolf to torment to death, for this was

a cruel age, not only in Russia. His mind was filled with brutal and cruel scenes and his heart with resentment and bitterness.

When he was thirteen he took matters into his own hands. He told the keepers of his hounds to arrest the boyar who was in power at the time. They did so and put him to death; some say that he was torn to pieces by the hounds, others that he died in prison. After that no one controlled Ivan; if he suspected any of his courtiers of wanting more power, they were thrown into prison or executed. The country looked after itself while its young ruler hunted with other young men, drank and reveled, with intervals of deep repentance, for he was, in his way, deeply religious. When he was sixteen he made two announcements: he wished to be crowned, not as Grand Prince but as Tsar, and he wished to be married, not to a foreign princess but to a Russian girl.

His father and grandfather had both been crowned Grand Princes of Moscow, Vladimir, etc.; they had both called themselves Tsar but the title had never been accepted by any other country. Ivan IV was crowned Tsar of all the Russias in the Cathedral of the Assumption in Moscow. He sat on a raised throne in the center of the church, surrounded by row upon row of courtiers in cloth of gold; the crown was placed on his head and the globe and scepter in his hands, while the air was filled with the solemn singing of the choir and the light from innumerable candles winked from the jeweled icons of the altar screen and lighted the paintings that covered the walls and pillars from floor to ceiling. Then he walked to the door and showed himself to the people, while all the bells rang madly and, according to a Tartar custom, gold coins were poured over his head and fell and rolled among the crowd.

Shortly afterward he was married to Anastasia Romanovna, the good and beautiful daughter of a boyar family. He had chosen her according to another Eastern custom. All the marriageable daughters of good family were sent to Moscow to be looked over, first by competent ladies of the court, who chose

the best from among them; then by the young Tsar himself. He fell in love at once with Anastasia and the marriage was a happy one. After it had been celebrated with great pomp and feasting, the two young people went on foot forty-five miles to the Troitsa monastery, to worship at the tomb of St. Sergius.

Their happiness was interrupted by a disaster: a large part of Moscow was destroyed by fire; thousands of people were killed and the Tsar's palace, churches, monasteries and innumerable houses were burned down. Some people said that it was witchcraft, but this was not one of the things that Ivan feared; he listened instead to a bold priest who strode up to him with upraised hand and said, "The thunder of God has come upon you, O Tsar, for your idleness and evil passions. Fire from Heaven has consumed Moscow and the cup of God's wrath has been poured into the hearts of the people!" Ivan was terrified and sobered. "Fear entered into my soul and trembling into my bones," he said shortly afterward. "I was moved, and repented of my wrongdoing." He made the priest who had rebuked him one of his chief counsellors and began his reign in a new mood, as promisingly as any young monarch could.

His first important act was to call an assembly of the whole empire. It was the first time that such a thing had been done; boyars, clergy, gentry and merchants came from every province and met in the Red Square, the great open space outside the walls of the Kremlin, in the commercial part of the city; and the people crowded round them, filling every corner. Ivan, tall and handsome, twenty years old, stood before them. He first addressed the Metropolitan: "Holy father, be my champion in the blessed work whereto we are dedicated. Early in life God deprived me of father and mother, and the boyars without care for me wished to rule the land themselves. In my name they stole power and honor and grew rich by misrule, oppressed the people, and no one said them nay. In my pitiful childhood I seemed both deaf and dumb." Then he turned sternly to the boyars. "You evil rebels and unjust stewards, what answer can

you give to our charge? How many tears, how much blood have you caused to flow? You will receive judgment from Heaven for your misdeeds." Finally he spoke to the people: "O people given to me by God, I pray you to have faith in Him and love for me. . . . Hence forward I will be your judge and your defender."

He appointed a minister to receive petitions from anyone who had a grievance; he ordered that the laws be revised and rewritten; he encouraged local self-government. He also called a council of the Church and asked them why so many thousands of monks were living idle in the many monasteries and what was being done with the enormous wealth that the Church was accumulating through gifts, trade, and the rent from their vast lands. For the time had gone by when every monk lived by his own labor; thousands of peasants now raised the food and did the work of the monasteries, which had grown so large that they were more like villages than monasteries.

These were works of peace, and wisely done. His next act was a far-reaching victory in war — the conquest of Kazan.

Kazan was one of the three strongholds of the Tartars. It stood on a hill on the left bank of the Volga above the junction of that great river with the Kama. It was a rich trading city that had taken the place of the old city of Bulgar; great fairs were held there and merchants came from the Caspian Sea, from the cities of Russia and from Asia to exchange their goods there. There was a strong fortress — a kremlin — and an outer city, as there was in Moscow. Wars occurred now and then between Russia and the Kazan Tartars; Ivan III had taken the city but he left a vassal Tartar to rule it. It controlled all the country east of Moscow and the navigation of the Volga and the Kama. Trouble broke out again in 1552 and Ivan decided to put an end to it for good.

He rode proudly at the head of his army, in a mantle of cloth of gold over his armor. Priests carrying the holy icons and banners went before him, for this was a holy war; the Cossacks of

the Don rode up to take their part in it; every prince and servitor brought his required men. When the great army was assembled, fifty thousand men went by boat and on horseback down the Volga and besieged Kazan in August. After six weeks of hard fighting the fortress fell, for the Russians had learned from Europe the use of gunpowder, while the Tartars still relied on their bows and arrows and the sort of artillery that Jenghis Khan had used. The Russians mined under the fortress and blew it up and then rushed in through the shattered walls. This time Kazan was permanently taken and a Russian governor and garrison was left there.

This was a most important victory. It was the first time that anything had been taken from the Tartars; it opened the way across Asia to the east and down the Volga to the south. Shortly afterward, Astrakhan, at the mouth of the Volga, was taken; this was an easier victory but no less important. The Volga became a Russian river; trade with the ports on the Caspian Sea was in the hands of Russian merchants, and an enormous, undefined territory was added to the empire of the Tsars. Only the Crimean Tartars, who were backed by the powerful Sultan of Turkey, remained a constant danger.

Ivan returned to Moscow from Kazan amid crowds delirious with joy, who knelt as he passed and crowded to kiss the hem of his mantle. At Vladimir the happy news was brought to him that Anastasia had borne a son. Surely no young man was ever happier than he when he rode triumphant into Moscow, was welcomed with tears of joy by his wife and saw the baby son who would reign after him.

Happiness never lasted long, however. Within six months after his victory Ivan fell very ill and his life was despaired of. Remembering his own experience, he was terrified as he thought of what might happen to his empire while his little son grew up. He summoned his whole court to his bedside and demanded that each one of them swear allegiance, on the cross, to his son. A few of them did this but many refused. "We would kiss

the cross for you, O Tsar," said one of them, "and for your son, the Tsarevich Dmitri, but we will not kiss it for the Tsaritsa's brothers who will rule us while your son is growing. Remember your own childhood!" They swore allegiance instead to the Tsar's cousin, an able young man who had fought bravely at Kazan. Ivan recovered, but his distrust of the boyars awoke again.

He had great plans for his country and wished to see it take its place among the Christian nations of Europe, which at this time were trading and conquering all over the earth. Russia must have a free way to the Baltic Sea if it wanted to be a part of Europe. It was blocked there by Teutonic Knights and merchants, by Sweden and by Poland, none of which wanted to see Russia become any more powerful and all of which wanted to keep the trade in Russian goods in their own hands.

European sailors were trying hard to find a quicker sea route to Asia than the long way around Africa; they hoped to discover a northeast passage over Europe or a northwest passage over America. Three daring English ships had sailed around the North Cape into the Arctic Ocean but could sail no farther because of the ice. Two turned back while a third ventured down into the White Sea and anchored near the present town of Archangel. There some fishermen told them, to their great surprise, that they were in Russia; they were taken to Moscow and received very graciously by Ivan, who was delighted to get into direct touch with England. Other merchants came by the same route; ambassadors were exchanged and the Muscovy Company was formed in England to trade with Russia and, through Russia, with the East. The very name, Muscovy, shows the domination of Moscow over the rest of the land, and also how little the word Russia was used.

Ivan did not have such good fortune on the Baltic. He sent to Germany for scientists, printers and workmen to teach his own people; but they were stopped at Lübeck by the magistrates of that great trading city who did not want Russia to be any

more civilized than it was. In 1558 Ivan declared war on the Teutonic Knights in Livonia and started to conquer that country. With the help of hordes of Tartars who were now under his command, his generals devastated the land, now conquering and now losing; but Poland and Sweden both supported the Germans, in order to keep Russia away from the Baltic coast. They were too strong for him and, after many years of war, nothing was gained. Ivan tried to get from England the help that he had sought in Germany, but the King of Poland wrote urgently to Queen Elizabeth: "The Muscovite, puffed up with pride . . . made more perfect in warlike affairs with engines of war and ships, will make assault on Christendom, which God defend! Up to now we can conquer him only because he is a stranger to education and does not know the arts."

Ivan the Terrible

ALL THAT Ivan had done so far, up to 1560, had been good and profitable for Russia. Power was in his hands; he had started to improve his government; he had won a great territory for his people and freed them forever from the danger of the Tartars in the east. (He built, in honor of that victory, one of the most fantastic buildings in the world, the Cathedral of St. Vasili on the Red Square.) He was happy in his wife's love and had loyal and trusted advisers. The English merchants who came to Moscow said that no ruler on earth was more loved or more unquestioningly obeyed than the Russian Tsar.

But disaster struck him again, and this time at his very heart. His beloved Anastasia died, after a lingering illness, in the summer of 1560. There was no suspicion of poison at the time but afterward Ivan, in his grief and renewed loneliness, held that she had been killed by the boyars who hated her family. "If you had not taken from me my doe," he said later to one of them, "there would not have been these slayings." A change took place in him as noticeable as that which took place after the burning

of Moscow, but a different sort of change. All the cruelty and suspicion, all the fear and hatred that had been aroused in him as a child possessed his grief-stricken heart and ruled his life until the end. A chronicler of the time says of him, "After that time there came upon the Tsar as it were a great and terrible tempest which disturbed the peace of his good heart. . . . His mind, with all its plenitude of wisdom, turned to the nature of the wild beast and he became a traitor to his own country."

During the remaining twenty-four years of his reign little was done that was good and much that was evil. Ivan dismissed the priest who had been his counsellor, to a monastery, and another trusted adviser was put in prison, where he soon died. He remembered the boyars who had refused to swear allegiance to his son because they did not want to be ruled by Anastasia's family. He took vengeance on them and on their families and friends, destroying them and their children and taking possession of all their property. He drank and feasted and made merry; a year after Anastasia's death he married a Circassian princess, a Moslem who turned Orthodox in order to marry the Tsar. He carried a staff with a sharp steel point and in a fury often struck people with it, sometimes killing them. There was no telling on whom his rage might fall: his most faithful soldiers and servants were as often killed or tortured as those whose loyalty he might suspect. He came to be called Ivan Grozny, "the Dread," usually translated "the Terrible."

Several boyars, Russians and Tartars, left the country, finding his service too dangerous. One of them, formerly a close friend of Ivan's, Andrei Kurbsky, wrote a long letter to him which Ivan answered, and the quarrel between Tsar and boyars is clear in their correspondence.

"To a once serene majesty," Kurbsky writes, "made famous by God but now darkened by your sins, by the infernal hate in your heart, diseased in conscience! Why do you bring torment upon the strong men of Israel, the glorious leaders of war given you by God? By slanderous invention you have found the loyal

to be traitorous, Christians to be sorcerers, light to be darkness and sweetness bitter. Was it not by these men that the yoke of the Tartars was broken? Was it not they who took the German fortresses to the honor of thy name? And our reward is destruction. . . . Let this letter, wet with my tears, be buried with you that you may appear at the judgment of God."

Ivan denies that he has ever killed or persecuted anyone. "Nay, rather, it is you boyars who have, as devils, from my youth up, assaulted my honor and have sought to take from me the power that has been granted me of God. . . . Is it against reason that a man should will not to be ruled by his slaves? . . . With zeal do I ever strive to lead men toward the truth that they may cease from these feuds and perverse customs of living with which kingdoms are undone. If subjects submit not themselves to their ruler, never shall strife cease in the land."

Both were right in their way: it was true that Ivan could not govern the country alone and that many of the boyars were true and faithful to him; on the other hand, the greatest danger to the state, greater than the danger from any outer enemy, was the quarreling and disunion that might break out at any time if the Tsar's power grew weak.

Ivan IV became again, in his own palace, the terrified, nervous creature he had been as a little boy. He brooded on the defection of Kurbsky; everywhere he suspected treason and he struck at it frantically wherever he thought it was. A few years after Anastasia's death, he left the Kremlin, in the dead of winter, and drove, with his family and his servants, to the village of Alexandrovo, beyond the monastery of Troitsa. He sent a message back to Moscow: "I was unable to bear the treachery by which I was surrounded; therefore I have forsaken the state and have taken my way whither God shall lead me." The people and the court were dumbfounded. They were lost without the Tsar. It was clear enough that the greatness of their country, their freedom from the Tartars, their very safety was due to the growing strength and power of the Tsars of Moscow. A deputa-

tion of bishops, boyars, merchants and officials went to Alexandrovo and, kneeling in the snow, begged Ivan to return. "I do agree," he said finally, "but on the following conditions: I shall be free to execute whatever traitors I wish to execute, and to visit anyone with my displeasure, be it by death, arrest, or confiscation of property, without incurring any blame on the part of the clergy."

They agreed to anything, if he would only come back; and yet they looked with dread at the face of their young Tsar. His keen eyes were wild, his face gray and haggard, his beard unkempt, and his tall body bent, leaning on his murderous staff. He was only thirty-four years old. He returned to the city and two days afterward began to kill. Kurbsky's family and seven boyars whom Ivan suspected of sympathizing with him, were put to death — six beheaded and one impaled — on the Red Square. Others were banished to monasteries in the north, on the White Lake or the shores of the White Sea.

Then he reorganized his whole surroundings. He refused to live in the Kremlin; he built himself a house in another part of Moscow and made his headquarters at Alexandrovo, although it was a hundred miles from the capital. To protect himself from the boyars he created a new court, which was a bodyguard, a secret police and a government all in one. He chose about a thousand men, some boyars, some grooms, servants, soldiers or slaves — anyone whom he fancied. To these men he gave certain quarters of the city to live in, turning the former owners out and sending them elsewhere to live. Then he took portions of the country, which he also gave to these men for their support, again turning out hundreds of landowners who had lived there all their lives. He increased his new court to five or six thousand and gradually took over about half of Russia for their support. He called them the "oprichnina" or the "separate part."

An extraordinary situation resulted from this: the country was divided into two parts, one governed in the usual way, by boyars and officials; the other by the oprichnina, the Tsar being

at the head of both. The purpose of the oprichnina was to break down the power of the boyars and to protect Ivan from them, although there was no evidence of the treachery that he feared. The oprichniks, as the members of the new group were called, dressed in black and carried at their saddlebows a dog's head and a broom, symbols of their office as hunters-down and sweepers-out of treason. They rode in bands through the country, killing and robbing as they pleased, terrorizing rich and poor alike, and then returned to their master at Alexandrovo, where they caroused and indulged in every wild and cruel pleasure. They were known as "the blackness of Hell." Sometimes Ivan had a fit of repentance, when he dressed his oprichniks in monks' robes and got them up at midnight or at dawn to stand long hours in church while he himself beat his head on the floor before the holy icons and prayed for those whom he had killed.

Then his rage would break out again and he would send his oprichniks out to arrest and to execute. Generals who had led his armies at Kazan and in Livonia, princes who had sat in his council or ruled his provinces were hung by their feet in the public square and cut to pieces, roasted over slow fires, impaled, or broken on the wheel. The cousin to whom the boyars had sworn allegiance in 1553 was killed and his mother drowned; children, wives, servants and friends were killed with the men whom he suspected; villages were wiped out even to the animals. When the saintly Metropolitan refused to give the Tsar his blessing, he was dragged from the cathedral during the service, cast into prison and later murdered.

Cities did not escape the mad suspicion of the Tsar. A plot was made against Novgorod by unknown persons; it was said that the governor had written to the Polish king, offering him the allegiance of the city. On the flimsiest evidence, Ivan led his oprichniks there in the winter of 1570, murdering and pillaging as they went. When his private army arrived at Novgorod, they

built a palisade around it so that no one could escape; then they entered it and locked the doors of all the churches and of all the houses. Then for five weeks the city was tortured to death.

Every day certain doors were unlocked and the citizens were driven out, a hundred at a time, into the square where they were tortured and killed. Ivan brought his eldest son with him to watch the sport. Whole families were driven into the river, where the strong current keeps it from freezing, and there they were drowned or thrust with poles under the ice. No one knows how many thousands or tens of thousands died in these agonies. After he was tired of killing, Ivan ordered all the churches sacked, the trading houses sacked and burned, and even the farms within riding distance were robbed of their cattle and their grain. Novgorod, whose liberty had been lost under Ivan III, never recovered from this second blow. In the middle of February the Tsar called all those that were left into the Square. "People of Novgorod," he said, "pray to God to bless our rule as Tsar; pray for our Christ-loving army that it may conquer all our enemies. Forget your wrongs; go now in peace to your homes!"

Yet he was not tired of killing, for in July of that same year he executed in hideous ways in the Red Square hundreds of men of Novgorod and of his own court, among them the first leader of the oprichnina, whom he had chosen to protect him from treachery. He disbanded all the oprichniks at the same time.

Violence marked his reign, as it has marked the whole history of Russia; if it did not come from without, it came from within. The massacre of Novgorod was followed by famine and plague, caused partly by the ravages of the oprichnina and by the exchanges of estates, some of which had not been cultivated since they changed hands. Many peasants had fled from the lands around Moscow; the English merchants, who praised Ivan when they first came to Russia and noticed the populous villages

and the farms they passed on their way to Moscow, came through later and found the villages deserted and the farms gone to waste.

Worse disaster came in the spring of 1571. The Crimean Tartars, supported by the Turks, came to the walls of Moscow while Ivan's main army was still fighting in Livonia. Ivan abandoned his capital; the Tartars set fire to the suburbs and a strong wind carried the flames over the whole city. "It consumed the greatest part of the city," an English traveler writes, "almost within four hours, being of thirty miles and more of compass. Then might you have seen a lamentable spectacle: beside the huge and mighty flame of the city all on fire, the people burning in their houses and streets and most of all such as labored to pass out of the gates where meeting together in a mighty throng wedged themselves so fast within the gate as that three ranks walked one upon another's head, the uppermost treading down those who were lower." Even the Tartars withdrew before the horror of the spectacle and went back, carrying thousands of people into slavery. "What with the Crim Tartar on one side and with his cruelty on the other, the Tsar hath but few people left," concludes the Englishman.

This fire, though it was so much worse than the former one, did not change Ivan's heart, although he saw in it again the punishment of God for his sins. His passions were now beyond his control. After wreaking his fury first on his supposed enemies and then on his favorites, he turned it at last on what was dearer than his own life — his eldest son. Anastasia had left two sons: one who was like his father, bold, intelligent and cruel, Ivan's companion in all his orgies, and a younger one, gentle and weak-minded, "fit only to ring bells," his father said. In a quarrel about his daughter-in-law, Ivan, in a fit of rage, struck his eldest son with his steel-pointed staff and the blow was mortal. Ivan was frantic with grief, for he had destroyed not only a beloved son but his heir, the hope and continuation of his own reign, the succession for which he had slain and

tortured right and left for nearly twenty years. He died three years after his son's death, in 1584.

It is astonishing that in those twenty years no protest had been made but Kurbsky's, no hand had been raised against him. Men had died in horrible agony, praying for the Tsar. A prince, who was ambassador in a foreign land, was asked, "How can you show such zeal for such a tyrant?" and replied, "We Russians are devoted to our sovereigns, whether they are cruel or kind." There was no alternative; no one had ever questioned the right of the House of Rurik to rule the land and the Tsar was now more powerful than Vladimir had been. Seated high on his throne like a Byzantine emperor, he was the head of the state and of the Church, ordained of God to rule the Russian land.

One more event of far-reaching importance happened during the last years of his reign, which is entered to his credit although it was done without his knowledge. When the oprichnina was given vast tracts of land, many landowners asked to be enrolled in it in order to keep their possessions. Among these was the Stroganov family who owned hundreds of square miles of land on both sides of the Kama River, near the Ural Mountains. Across the mountains was a Tartar horde, one of the many that had broken off from the original mighty empire of Jenghis Khan. They were dangerous to the Stroganovs who asked for help from the Tsar. Since his armies were busy elsewhere, he answered, "Go to the Cossacks of the Volga — they will help you."

The Stroganovs sent some men down the Kama into the Volga; as they came out of the forest on to the steppe, they saw shepherds with their flocks. "Where shall we find some bold Cossacks ready for adventure?" they asked the shepherds. "The boldest and the worst of them is the headman Yermak," was the answer. "The Tsar has condemned him to death for his robberies but no one can execute him, for the very soldiers fear

him." They followed the shepherd's directions to Yermak's camp and offered him a rich reward if he would fight the Tartars. He was willing enough; he rode north with six hundred followers and entered the service of the Stroganovs.

The Cossacks built boats during the winter and launched them, when the ice broke, on a river that ran down from the mountains. The Urals are neither high nor steep; the men found an easy pass, carried their boats over and launched them again on a river flowing eastward. From the top of the hills the land to the east looked just like the land they had left: forests stretched on all sides to the horizon, broken only by wide, curving rivers.

Before long, Tartar arrows whistled through the trees, wounding or killing a man here or there. Scouts went ahead and reported that a barrier had been laid across the river. Cossacks were used to that sort of ambush. "Quick!" cried Yermak. "Cut logs and set them upright in the boats! Hang your coats on them and set your caps on top; then send them down the river!" When this was done the Cossacks crept along the bank and, while the Tartars were intent on shooting at the logs, they fell upon them from behind and killed or captured them all. From the prisoners Yermak found out that the Khan's capital was the town of Sibir on the Irtysh River.

The Cossacks had firearms while their enemies had none. The Tartars were terrified by the "bows that thundered and shot fire" and Yermak defeated the Khan's forces and took Sibir. They found the town filled with furs and other treasure. He and his men could not have realized the full import of their brief warfare, but they knew that they had done enough to deserve pardon of the Tsar. They loaded sledges with piles of precious furs, and Yermak's most trusted lieutenant went to Moscow and was admitted to the presence of the terrible Tsar. Ivan could guess more shrewdly than they the value of their victory; he received the messenger graciously and sent him back with presents for himself, the headman and all his men.

A gateway was thus opened from European Russia into the vast wilderness of Siberia, as it was called, after the Tartar capital. The Cossacks' victory doubled and tripled the extent of Ivan's empire; infinite riches lay within its soil, its forests and its rivers.

The singers of bylinas caught up the story and told and retold Yermak's adventures; the tale of the log-men is still listened to with shouts of laughter. They sang a new cycle of songs about Ivan the Terrible, too, celebrating the conquests of Kazan and Astrakhan and Siberia, singing, too, of his killing the boyars, whom the people did not love. But in their songs they would never allow that he had killed his son; the Tsarevich was always rescued by his uncle, Nikita Romanov, whom they did love.



CHAPTER X

THE TIME OF TROUBLES

The Sons of Ivan Grozny

VIOLENCE HAS BEEN the lot of the Russian people throughout their history. Their vast, flat plains are open to the tempests that sweep down from the north and defenseless before the deep cold of winter and the dry heat of summer; even so their borderless land has been open to attack from east, south and west. If violence has not come from without, it has come from within. In the early days before the Tartars were strong, the princes brought violence to the land by fighting among themselves; then came the devastating conquest by the Tartars and the two hundred and fifty years of struggle to cast off the yoke. When the country was strong and united, free from its enemies, the violence of one man's character caused almost as much destruction as a foreign conquest.

Ivan the Terrible, when he killed his eldest son, destroyed the dynasty of Rurik. To be sure, he left two other sons, but the

elder, the new Tsar Feodor, also a son of Anastasia, was feeble-minded. He was a young man of twenty-seven when his father died, sandy-haired, stooping, with a shambling gait because his legs were weak, and a foolish smile on his lips most of the time. Ivan, knowing that this son was not able to rule, appointed five boyars to rule in his name; among them were the sons of the very men who had terrified his own childhood. He left another son, two or three years old, the child of the last of the six wives whom he had married to console himself, in vain, for his beloved Anastasia.

The most important of the five boyars was Nikita Romanov, Anastasia's brother. He died, unfortunately, shortly afterward, and was succeeded by Boris Godunov. The Godunovs were descended from a Tartar chieftain who had become a Christian and had settled in Moscow in Ivan Kalita's time. Boris was the Tsar's brother-in-law, as Feodor had married his sister, Irene; he was brilliant, powerful and handsome. He killed or exiled the other boyars, their families and friends, and became Regent for Feodor, whom he served faithfully as long as the young Tsar lived. Feodor listened to the long services in the churches, was entertained by the court dwarfs and jesters or by bear baiting, and went on long pilgrimages from one monastery to another; while Boris presided over the Council of Boyars, attended wisely to all the business of the great empire and its relations with other countries.

Russia was at the height of its power and splendor. In spite of the devastation and horror caused by the last part of Ivan's reign, nothing could take from him the glory of the conquest of Kazan, Astrakhan and Siberia. Riches poured in from those regions: a wealth of furs from Siberia, where sables and the precious black fox abounded; from the Volga and the Caspian Sea came Eastern goods, free of Tartar tolls — silks and velvets, spices, jewels and incense. Never had the court of Moscow appeared so splendid to the eyes of foreign ambassadors. When they were received there, Feodor, with his foolish smile, sat on

a high golden throne upheld by two silver lions; beside him stood Boris, splendid in cloth of gold and jewels; on a lower level stood the sons of the former khans of Kazan and Astrakhan, now faithful vassals of the Tsar. On each side of the throne, as in the anteroom, stood rank on rank of boyars, dressed in their long coats of cloth of gold, their jeweled collars, and their hats trimmed with fox or sable. Their appearance was made more impressive by their complete silence, broken only by the Tsar's command. The ritual of the court was copied from that of the Byzantine emperors.

After this reception, at which an ambassador might present his sovereign's letter and be welcomed by the Tsar, he was usually invited to dinner. There, though he was seated at a lower table than the Tsar's, he was served on golden dishes; and Feodor, if the ambassador was in favor, sent special foods and wines to him. The foreigner looked round him and saw with amazement that four or five hundred other guests were also being served on golden dishes with an abundance of meat, poultry, wine and sweets. He was lodged in a comfortable house in the Kremlin and provided with more food and wine than he and his household could possibly consume.

Moscow was growing into a beautiful city. It had three encircling walls: first the high brick walls of the Kremlin with five magnificent gates; then the walls of the commercial city, enclosing the great bazaar, the shops and houses of the merchants; then what was called the White City, because its walls were white. Beyond these the many suburbs, with their gardens, orchards and meadows, reached out until they were lost in the surrounding country. Four hundred churches lifted their golden or colored domes like flowers against the sky; five thousand bells rang out at the coronation of a Tsar, a victory or a religious festival. In fact, visitors complained that they could not sleep for the bells that rang for midnight and dawn services.

During the last years of Ivan's reign, largely through the efforts of Boris, the Metropolitan of Moscow was raised to the

rank of Patriarch. This change made the Russian Church completely independent of the now helpless Patriarch of Constantinople and gave added reason for the city's proud title, "The Third Rome."

Ambassadors came to Russia from England, France, Spain, Austria, Germany, Sweden and Denmark; from Poland, Turkey, Persia and the various Tartar khanates that had survived. The eastern European countries feared the Turks who were now conquering more and more of the Balkan lands; they realized that Russia could be their most powerful ally against the Sultan and courted it for that reason. The western European countries sought Russia's trade. The Turkish fleet prevented them from going through the Mediterranean to its eastern shores, and so European merchants longed to go down the rivers of Russia to trade in the bazaars of Persia and Turkestan. The proud Hanseatic League, which had once kept the Russian trade in its own hands, sent the Burgomaster of Lübeck, one of its richest cities, with fine gifts to Boris' court: two statues, one of Venus and one of Fortune, two eagles, two horses, a lion, a unicorn, a rhinoceros, an ostrich, a pelican and a peacock, all beautifully wrought in gilded silver. The Burgomaster begged the Tsar to grant the League its old privileges and to allow them to have bazaars in Novgorod, Pskov and Moscow. This request was graciously granted by Boris, but he allowed no merchants to go through Russia to the Eastern markets; that trade he kept in Russian hands.

All these far-reaching relations, as well as the affairs of his own country, Boris dealt with ably. For fourteen years Feodor sat on the throne and comparative peace reigned in the land. The people were grateful for this to their Tsar, for they believed that his constant prayers and his gentle nature brought a blessing to them all; they loved and revered him.

One dark deed stained the record of his reign. Feodor's little half-brother, Dmitri, had been sent to live in Uglich with his mother, Ivan's widow, her family and household. Boris sent

one of his boyars to look after her affairs and to see that her family made no trouble. One spring day in 1591 Dmitri's mother heard a cry from the courtyard and ran out to find the little Tsarevich lying on the ground bleeding to death from a knife wound in his throat. There was a great hue and cry; the alarm bell of the city was rung; the people believed that Boris' boyar had murdered Dmitri and in their fury they killed him and his family. The news of the child's death shocked Moscow and the whole country, for the Tsars had become sacred persons and this boy and Feodor were all that remained of the dynasty of Ivan Kalita. It was rumored openly that Boris had arranged the murder so that he might be Tsar after Feodor, who had no son and probably would never have one.

A committee of inquiry was sent to Uglich, a group of boyars among whom was Vasili Shuiski. They brought back the astonishing story that Dmitri, while playing, had fallen in a fit and accidentally cut his own throat! The story was accepted; the people of Uglich were cruelly punished for having killed the supposed murderers. The leaders were executed and many others exiled to Siberia, whose vast distances Boris was finding convenient to separate him from his enemies. Even the city's bell was given the supreme punishment for a bell: its tongue was taken out and it, too, was banished to Siberia. Dmitri's mother was forced to enter a convent and her family sent to distant places. But ugly rumors persisted.

Feodor and his wife did have a child shortly after this event, but it was a girl who died in babyhood. In January, 1598, Feodor died, deeply mourned by all the people. Who would now be Tsar?

For the first time in more than seven hundred years there was no Grand Prince in Russia; for the first time since the reign of Ivan Kalita the throne of Moscow was empty. It is interesting that no other descendants of Rurik claimed the throne, for there were plenty of them in Russia: the Shuiskis, the Bielskis, the Mstislavskis and others were all of Rurik's line. But no one

tried to find the next eldest of kin. The inheritance from father to son, the high and sacred position that the Princes of Moscow had assumed, were accepted without question. There was no Tsar and the people were dumbfounded.

Feodor had made a will, leaving the throne to the Tsaritsa Irene, sister of Boris; but Irene, overcome by a real grief and blaming herself for not having borne a son, immediately entered a convent. Boris went with her and stayed there for a while, for he loved his sister. Meanwhile the people crowded into the great square outside the walls of the Kremlin, which was called the Red, or the Beautiful, Square. The Council of Boyars went to them there and asked for their allegiance, but the people clamored for Irene. When they were told that she had entered a convent they shouted, "Let Boris be Tsar! He has ruled us for fourteen years. Let Boris be Tsar!" Patriarch and archbishops, boyars and merchants went to the convent and asked Boris to be Tsar. He refused. "The National Assembly must be called," he said. "They alone have the right to choose a Tsar."

The Assembly was summoned and met in the middle of February. With amazing speed, in the dead of winter, men came from every province to the capital, for the Russians had learned from the Tartars how to travel fast, with constant relays of horses, and the sleighs ran swiftly, day and night, over the level snow. The Assembly unanimously chose Boris but he refused again — how sincerely, with what dread or triumph in his heart, who knows? Then a great crowd of people, led by the Patriarch and priests, bearing aloft the image of the Virgin of Vladimir — which Andrei Bogoliubsky had taken from Vyshgorod centuries before — walked out in the winter dawn to the convent and knelt in the snow before its gate, imploring Boris to accept, begging his sister, the Tsaritsa, to sanction his coronation.

At last he accepted, but not until the snows had melted did he leave his sister and return to the city. In September he was

crowned amid the wild joy of the people; he stood at the door of the cathedral in his splendid robes, crowned, with the globe and scepter in his hands, while the shower of golden coins was poured over him and all the bells pealed. He was the descendant of a Tartar chief, the first elected Tsar.

The Troubles

WHILE THESE things were going on, a young monk whom no one noticed was wandering from monastery to monastery, picking up what knowledge and information he could. He was restless, bold and imaginative; he finally came to Moscow, and, because he was clever at writing, he became secretary to the Patriarch. He pursued his studies, found out what was going on in the Kremlin and in the streets and a strange idea took shape in his mind. He said to some of the other monks, "Do you know, some day I shall be Tsar of Moscow!" This dangerous statement was carried to Boris, who ordered the impertinent young man to be exiled to a monastery on the White Sea.

He did not stay there; he escaped and traveled about a thousand miles to one of the southern cities near Chernigov where he took refuge in a monastery. When he went away he left a note in his cell: "I am the Tsarevich Dmitri, son of Ivan IV. I shall not forget your kindness when I am on my father's throne." A little later he persuaded another man to put on his monk's habit and to take his name. He himself went below the cataracts of the Dnieper and joined the Cossacks, for he must know how to ride and fight if he were to carry out his plans. He learned to do both very well, for he was brave and athletic and there were no better teachers than the Zaporogian Cossacks. He learned to speak Polish and when he left the camp he entered the service of a Polish prince.

There he continued his clever tactics. He pretended to be ill and asked that a priest be sent to him, as he was dying. To

this priest, a Roman Catholic, he entrusted a paper which read, "I am the Tsarevich Dmitri, son of Ivan IV. I was saved from my murderers and hidden. A priest's son died in my place." The priest and the prince read this paper eagerly and went again to see the patient. With a trembling hand he drew from his bosom a finely wrought jeweled cross and told them that his godfather had given it to him, naming a well-known boyar. There were many such crosses among the Cossacks' loot.

Here was a chance for the Poles and the Roman Catholics! For the Poles, a chance to gain power in Russia, perhaps to unite it to Poland, as had been done with Lithuania; for the Roman Catholics, here was a chance to reunite the two churches under the Pope, as they longed to do. Both things might be accomplished if the Tsar at Moscow were beholden to them. So the Polish king chose to believe this strange young man who is known to history as the False Dmitri, gave him a palace and revenue and honored him as the son of Ivan IV; and the news ran east and west, into Europe and into Russia, that the Tsarevich Dmitri was alive and intended to regain his rightful crown.

It seemed an unequal battle: on one side was a rather unattractive young man, a renegade monk, a Cossack, in a foreign land; on the other the Tsar Boris, powerful, splendid, able to summon a hundred thousand soldiers from his private domains alone (it was said), chosen by the people, blessed by the Church to be absolute ruler over one of the greatest countries of the world. The amazing thing is that the young man won.

After Boris became Tsar, he ruled as he had done while Feodor was alive. He kept at his side his young son, a promising, handsome boy whom he adored and whom he was educating as no Tsarevich had ever before been educated for his high task. Boris invited foreign artists, physicians, merchants and scholars into Russia, for he, like his friend and master, Ivan IV, realized how important it was for Russia to know all that was

known in the rest of Europe. He beautified Moscow and built the bell tower named after Ivan the Great. But in spite of his able rule, there was uneasiness in the hearts of the people and an uneasiness in the heart of Boris that had never been there while he was Regent for the Tsar Feodor Ivanovich. Like Ivan, he began to suspect, to torture and to punish; he had an army of spies; he accepted the accusations of servants against their masters, of sons against fathers, and of friends against friends. For two years the crops failed because of spring rains and early frosts; a terrible famine followed and although Boris was more generous and resourceful than any former ruler in meeting it, people wondered if this were not a punishment for sin, and they remembered the murder of Dmitri. Their Tsar, on whom they depended so completely, was not chosen by God, but by themselves, a very different matter. After all, they could choose another.

In the summer of 1604, the False Dmitri appeared on the banks of the Dnieper at the head of a motley army. The King of Poland had signed a truce with Russia and therefore was not willing to fight for him but he allowed several Polish nobles to do so and several thousand Cossacks also joined the pretender. The False Dmitri was a master of propaganda: he sent messages and proclamations into Russia, knowing well how imaginations would be fired by the thought of the persecuted little boy, the son of their terrible and beloved Tsar. Boris, unwilling to take these pretensions too seriously, tried to combat propaganda with truth: there were men who had known the little Dmitri alive and who had seen him dead. He published these facts, but the truth did not prevail. Cities in southern Russia opened their gates to the False Dmitri; the people, weeping with joy, crowded to kiss his mantle. One city, commanded by a loyal boyar, held out; but most of southern Russia went over to the pretender.

At last, in late autumn, Boris sent out an army, but he did not lead it. He who had led half a million men against the Crimean Tartars, years before, stayed in Moscow. Perhaps he

could not face a man who took the name of Dmitri; it is hard to explain his conduct except by assuming that he had a guilty conscience. In the first fight the Russians were thrown into disorder and retreated. Boris sent more men, in all about eighty thousand, while four thousand more Cossacks joined the False Dmitri. In the second battle, the pretender was completely defeated; thousands of his men were killed, the rest fled, but the Russians did not pursue them and did not catch their leader.

The strange drama was not finished. In the spring of 1605 Boris suddenly died and the boyars swore allegiance to his sixteen-year-old son. Some of the best of the boyars were recalled from the army to advise the young Tsar; the one man who had opposed the False Dmitri in southern Russia was left in command of the army. In May, to the amazement of both sides, this man proclaimed to the army that the pretender was truly the Tsarevich, and surrendered to him. The False Dmitri came with his own ragged army, reviewed the Russian host and sent it on to Moscow, following it a little later, with superb self-confidence.

In Moscow there was consternation and despair; what hope was there when the entire army had gone over to the enemy? The False Dmitri sent a letter to be read in the Red Square: "The die is cast," it ended, "the army is mine and the cities. Will you dare to start a civil war to please the widow of Godunov and her son?" Some boyars tried to stop the reading but the people shouted, "The time of the Godunovs is past! The sun of Russia is rising. Long live the Tsar Dmitri!" They rushed to the Kremlin, seized the son and the widow of Boris and threw them into prison where shortly after they were killed, the boy fighting passionately for his life. In June the False Dmitri, calm, dignified and gracious, entered Moscow on a white horse, surrounded by Russian and Polish troops, loaded with rich gifts, amid the frantic joy of the crowds. He was crowned in July.

The rejoicing did not last long. The Russian people had put

up with twenty-four years of terrible tyranny from Ivan IV because he was their sovereign by right of birth, but they were quick to turn against their own choice or a pretender. Tsar Dmitri surprised his Council with his intelligence, his grasp of foreign affairs, his dignity and resolution; but he offended them and the people in many ways. They did not like his Polish and Roman Catholic friends nor his free and easy ways. He liked to tame wild horses and to fight bears, which was not fitting in a Tsar; he would not get up at cockcrow and then take a long nap after dinner; he slept late and after dinner he roamed the streets, exploring the city, talking to shopkeepers. Was this really Ivan's son? Rumors arose again.

He was denounced by several people, for many men had seen him when he was secretary to the Patriarch. He answered this by punishments, tortures and exile. When he was in Poland he had fallen in love with the daughter of a Polish noble who had helped him; in the winter of 1606 he sent for his bride, who was escorted with great pomp and splendor to Moscow to be married there. This wedding was the final offense to the Russians. Moscow was full of Poles; the new Tsaritsa was a Roman Catholic. About ten days after the wedding a group of boyars led by Vasili Shuiski, turned a mob against the Polish visitors while the boyars broke into the palace to hunt out the Tsar.

The False Dmitri leaped out of a window to escape them, but was killed as he lay injured in the court. His body was burned and the ashes shot from a cannon to make sure that he was dead. He had been Tsar less than a year.

The Troubles Continue

FOR SEVEN years after that there was chaos in Russia. Two days after the False Dmitri's death, Vasili Shuiski was made Tsar by the crowd in the Red Square, without waiting for a National Assembly. But each new Tsar, however chosen, had a weaker hold on the people than the former one. A serious revolt broke

out in the southeast where Cossacks, fugitive peasants, people driven from their homes by famine and war were gathered. Under the leadership of a soldier, who had been a slave in Turkey, an army of discontented soldiers, peasants, slaves and poor nobles marched on Moscow. The Ural Cossacks produced another pretender who claimed to be the son of Tsar Feodor. Both these revolts were put down but a more dangerous one appeared.

If the Tsarevich Dmitri could rise from the dead, why could not the Tsar Dmitri do the same? A second False Dmitri appeared, supported as the first had been by Poles and Cossacks. His army came within ten miles of Moscow and besieged the capital for a year. Many neighboring cities and towns yielded to him or were taken by him and men did not know whom to obey. Fantastic things happened. The mother of the real little Dmitri, who had recognized the first pretender as her son, now acknowledged the second, who did not resemble either his predecessor or the boy whom they both claimed to be. The Polish wife of the first pretender became the wife of the second and complicated matters by bearing a son; while many boyars went back and forth between Moscow and the camp of the besieging army, to be on the safe side.

In all the confusion, the Troitsa Monastery held firm and faithful: from the surrounding country people sought safety inside its powerful walls; monks, soldiers and gentry held off Poles and Cossacks for more than a year until the siege was given up.

The Cossacks robbed and devastated; the new pretender was worthless and could not control his army; the country was in a turmoil, each man for himself. Some sought help from abroad: a group of boyars offered the throne to the son of the King of Poland; a nephew of Tsar Vasili, a fine young man who might have become a leader, asked the King of Sweden for five thousand soldiers and came with them to the relief of Moscow, where he was poisoned for his pains. The Poles and the pre-

tender advanced on the capital, and the citizens, crowding into the Red Square where they had made Vasili Tsar, now called on him to abdicate. He retired without a protest and became a monk.

Again there was no Tsar. The crowd, longing to believe that some member of the ancient dynasty still lived, clamored for the second False Dmitri, but the boyars, who had killed the first, could not stomach a second. They again offered the throne to the Polish Crown Prince and sent word to the Polish troops that the gates of Moscow would be opened to them if they would drive away the pretender. This the Poles did gladly, and shortly afterward they not only entered Moscow but were admitted within the holy precincts of the Kremlin and were garrisoned there.

The realization that their country was being handed over to the Poles, their ancient enemies and the enemies of the Orthodox Church, brought the Russians to their senses. They had not been able to unite *for* anything but here was something that they could all unite *against*. Letters were sent from city to city, from army to army: "Let us be all at one, to stand for the House of the Most Holy Mother of God and for the Moscow sovereignty, till God shall give us a sovereign to be chosen by all the land." In the absence of a Tsar, the Patriarch took the lead and played a noble part, writing to the cities, to the boyars and generals, urging them to meet and to act. He lived in Moscow and was therefore in the power of the Poles; they took him to the Red Square and ordered him to tell the people to yield to Poland, but he spoke up bravely, "Blessed are those who shall save the Moscow sovereignty and cursed are the traitors." He was thrown into prison and starved to death. The abbot of the Troitsa Monastery, where St. Sergius had left a spark of holiness, sent messages all over the country to the same effect as those of the Patriarch.

Action started in Nizhni Novgorod when one of the Patriarch's letters was read in the cathedral. A rich cattle dealer named

Minin offered all his wealth and the other citizens enthusiastically followed. Minin and a neighboring prince raised an army and moved toward Moscow, their forces growing as they advanced. The Cossacks at Moscow first opposed them and then joined them. Here at last was leadership which every patriotic Russian could follow. Moscow was besieged and in October, 1612, the Poles surrendered. In the fighting, most of the city was burned.

The country was saved from what the people feared most — a foreign conquest. They knew now that they wanted a Russian Tsar and not only a Tsar but a new dynasty to which they could give their loyalty. A fourth pretender appeared at Pskov but no one paid any attention to him. A National Assembly was summoned from every city and from every class: boyars, priests, merchants, workmen and peasants, to choose a Tsar. Who was there whom they could choose?

Hardly one noble family had come with honor through the reigns of Ivan, of Boris and all through the Time of Troubles. This one had gone to one pretender or the other, that one to the Poles or the Swedes. One name was greatly loved: that of Anastasia's family, the Romanovs. Her brother Nikita's eldest son had been forced by Boris to enter the church and had become a Metropolitan; this man's son, Mikhail, was a boy of sixteen and had taken no part in these nightmarish times. He was connected, through marriage, with Ivan IV, for Anastasia, whose memory was still revered, was his great-aunt. All these things were in his favor. The Assembly voted unanimously for him; the people shouted his name in the Red Square.

Mikhail was staying at a convent with his mother, who had been forced to take the veil; neither he nor she was enthusiastic at his election, and small wonder. "My son is not of age," said Mikhail's mother to the envoys who came to offer him the throne, "and the people of Russia were traitors to their former rulers, Tsar Boris, the False Dmitri and Tsar Vasili Shuiski, to whom they had sworn allegiance. Besides, the empire is ruined;

the treasures of the former Tsars are gone, the domains lost, the soldiers are become beggars. How can the future Tsar pay his army, keep up his court and fight his enemies?" "We have all been punished," the envoys answered humbly. "All the towns have come to an agreement and will be faithful." Mikhail accepted the throne and was crowned in Moscow in July, 1613.

The Time of Troubles, beginning with the appearance of the first False Dmitri, had lasted nearly ten years. The country had been shaken to its foundations; all that Mikhail's mother said was true. The Poles, though they retired from Moscow, still held the strong border city, Smolensk; Sweden had taken the only strip of Baltic coast that had hitherto belonged to Russia. But there was great strength and patience in the people and abundance in the land. Out of the ruin arose a new dynasty, the Romanov, and a new state — no longer Muscovy, but the Empire of Russia.



CHAPTER XI

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Serfdom

THE TIME OF TROUBLES had lasted for nearly ten years, but the land had been in a turmoil for fifty years, ever since the death of Anastasia Romanovna. The last twenty-four years of Ivan IV's reign had created havoc; there was a breathing-spell during the reign of his son Feodor; then came the famine of 1601-1603 and after that the Troubles.

All the people suffered from these calamities. Many great boyar families were wiped out entirely during those years; many lost their property and were no better off than any other servitor of the state. The gentry were called to war after war in which many lost their lives or their freedom, some chained to a Turkish oar, others locked in a Polish dungeon. The merchants lost their trade and the workmen their jobs when wars blocked the rivers. No one suffered more than the peasants, who were always at the mercy of those who owned the land,

and most of whom were so poor that any added misfortune brought them to starvation.

A greater misfortune than they had ever known awaited them during the early days of the Romanov Dynasty. In order to understand how this came about it will be well to know how the peasants had lived up to this time. They were, after all, the great majority of the people.

In the princely days the peasant lived where he chose. He made a yearly contract with the owner of the land and, if life was not too hard, he stayed on the plot that he had rented and considered it his own, handing it on to his sons who renewed their father's contract, paying a certain rent in money or produce and working for the landlord for an agreed time. If any man did not like either the land or its lord he was free to leave in the autumn after the harvest was gathered, if he had fulfilled his contract and paid any debts he might have incurred. This happened often: the peasants had moved freely from the provinces round Kiev up into the forests between the Oka and the Volga; they had moved farther up into the northeast toward the Urals to avoid the Tartars. When the princes of Moscow began to "gather the Russian land" and defied the Tartars, peasants flocked into their domain because it was safe.

But under the first Tsars, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, a great change took place in the ownership of land. The Tsars, indeed, gathered the Russian land — into their own hands. They took from many princes their whole territory; they took over all the land belonging to Novgorod and Pskov; and all this land became the property of the Tsars. They gave it, as we have seen, to the gentry, to any men who would fight for them, in return for their service in war. The gentry, however, did not own this land: it was given to them for their support during their lifetime; after their death it might be given to one of their sons or to someone else or it might return to the Tsar.

Therefore the peasants, who had lived on the land for gen-

erations, perhaps, found themselves under new masters who, since they did not own the land, wanted to get the most out of it while they had the use of it and often demanded an unreasonable amount of rent and work from the peasants. Besides paying in produce and work what the master demanded, the peasants had to pay a tax to the Tsar who owned the land and also do any public work, such as road-building or fortification, that the local official might demand of them. It is not strange, therefore, that they often left the gentry's domains and tried to make better contracts with a boyar or a monastery, or settled on state lands belonging directly to the Tsar, where they paid taxes, rent and work, but had only one master, the state, instead of two, the state plus the landlord.

The Church owned enormous tracts of land. The Tsars gave to it hundreds or thousands of acres of the vast woodland that seemed to have no limits and was at their disposal. Boyars also gave land to the Church in return for its prayers or for permission to enter a monastery in old age. People believed, as they did in most parts of the world, that prayer was useful to the dead; therefore in their wills they left land to monasteries in return for yearly remembrance and prayers for their souls. The big monasteries now looked like fortified towns, with high thick walls, sometimes mounted with cannon, surrounding several churches and many other buildings. The monks no longer worked with their own hands to raise their food and make their clothes; hundreds and sometimes thousands of peasants settled on the lands that had been given to the monastery, worked for the monks and paid them rent. Some of the monasteries were great trading centers and became very rich through the sale of the produce which was raised by the peasants.

The peasants, then, could settle on four different kinds of land: on state land, on church land, on the land of the few remaining boyars who owned their property, and on the land of the gentry who used the property during their lifetime. Since

all this land was of no use at all unless it was cultivated, there was a sort of tug of war between landlords for the labor of the peasants. They tempted laborers from each other's estates with offers to pay their debts or to pay their taxes for so many years; they kidnapped whole families from one estate to another. In this contest the gentry usually came off worst, as their holdings were smaller than those of the churches or the boyars and they had less to offer.

The labor situation grew much worse during the reign of Ivan IV and the Time of Troubles.

In the first place, the conquest of Kazan in 1552 and of Astrakhan in 1556 opened a most tempting new field to the peasants. For the first time in history the eastern steppe was safe, with its rich treeless soil. Across central Russia there is a wide belt of land called the Black Soil where for thousands of years the grasses have rotted into the ground and made a deep layer of fertile earth. There were no trees to be burned and cut down, no stumps to be dragged out by their roots, no marshy, clayey soil to be contended with. The plow cut sweetly into the boundless steppe and the seed sprang up under the hot sun into an abundant harvest. Farmers followed at the soldiers' heels as these vast plains were added to the empire, and the central provinces lost thousands of laborers. The conquest of Siberia at the end of the century opened a still wider field to pioneers.

Trouble at home spurred on this migration. Ivan the Terrible gave most of the center of Great Russia to his oprichniks; many of them were cruel and greedy men who knew that their time of power was short and who ground what they could out of the peasants who had been handed over to them with the land. The peasants fled by thousands to the steppe and to Siberia. The famine under Boris Godunov and the ravages of the Time of Troubles sent new waves of fugitives to the frontiers or to the Cossack camps. There was a serious shortage of labor and there-

fore of food, and the Tsar's servitors, the gentry, felt it most keenly.

Most of the migrating peasants were runaways: that is, they had left their homes without paying the debts they owed their landlords, for the simple reason that they could not pay those debts. At best it was hard to support themselves and to pay their dues and taxes, because the land and the climate were not favorable for farming; it was almost impossible to lay aside enough for the payment of debts. And every farmer was in debt to start with, for he usually came to a new landlord with empty hands and had to borrow seed for the first sowing as well as tools and livestock. This loan was increased purposely as time went on in order to keep the farmer from leaving. If he were fortunate enough to repay this loan, he must still pay his landlord, when he left, for the use of the house and other buildings he had occupied, according to the number of years he had lived there. At the best of times, this was very difficult; during years of war or famine it was impossible. If he left without paying, he could be pursued, brought back and punished.

From the peasants' point of view, all this was bitterly hard; let us look at it from the point of view of the Tsars, their advisers and the gentry.

We have seen how, under the leadership of the Grand Princes and Tsars of Moscow, the country was freed from the Tartars and also from the wars and disunion caused by its own princes. Under Ivan III Russia found itself a nation which had to support and defend itself amid difficulties and dangers. It had no mountains to protect it, as Spain and Italy and India had; no seas, such as England and Japan and the new Americas had around them; there was nothing to hold off an enemy but Russian bodies and weapons. The southern frontiers were wide open to the yearly raids and invasions of the Tartars. Therefore the Tsars must have hundreds of thousands of armed men, ready at a moment's notice,

to serve as boundaries against the Poles and the Swedes in the west, against the Tartars and the Turks in the south, against whatever new danger might come through the broad gateway to the east. And of course the armies were not only for defense: the lost lands of Rus were still considered a part of the Tsar's patrimony, and trade with western Europe could never flourish if Russia were shut away from the Baltic coast.

Other European nations were always amazed at the vast numbers of Russian soldiers: armies in those days were counted by tens of thousands; Russian armies by hundreds of thousands. This was not only because of the great extent of the Russian frontier; it was also because for centuries the worst enemy had been the Tartars and the Tartars did not *have* armies, they *were* armies, every man being a soldier.

How then could these vast numbers of Russian soldiers be paid and kept? Obviously, no country, however rich, could afford to pay a standing army of such great size; therefore the Tsar gave land to his soldiers for their support and they served him whenever they were called upon. The land was useless without labor; therefore the peasants supported the soldiers who fought for the whole country. This might not have been too unfair an arrangement if the peasants had not also paid heavy taxes; the clergy, the nobles and the gentry paid no taxes at all.

When streams of peasants began to move into Siberia and on to the steppe, the foundation of the state began to totter. The gentry got no food or money from their land; how then could they appear, armed, equipped and mounted, when called to war? They began to complain to the government and to ask that their runaway peasants be returned, no matter how many years after they had escaped; they increased loans and charges to be paid on departure; they began to write into the contracts that the peasant must agree to stay always on their land.

And their appeals were answered, for the Tsar depended as much on the gentry as the gentry depended on the peasants. The

boyars had been destroyed because they were too independent, but the gentry had to obey the Tsar and serve him faithfully or he would take away their lands and their living. The interests of the Tsar and the gentry were the same; therefore laws were made to keep the peasants from moving.

At first, a landlord was given five years in which to find his runaway laborer; if found, the peasant must return and fulfill all his obligations, but after five years he was free. The five-year term was extended to ten years and then to fifteen. Finally, in 1646, under Alexei, the second Romanov Tsar, the time limit was abolished altogether. The escaped peasant could never be sure that he would not be recognized and taken back to his former landlord.

At the same time every landowner was ordered by the Tsar to register the peasants on his estate and after that, unless by special agreement with his landlord, the peasants and their descendants were bound to remain on the estate where they had been registered and to serve whoever might own it. No matter how poor the land, how heavy the taxes, how cruel and unjust the landlord, there was no escape and no appeal for the peasant, his family and his descendants. He belonged to the land and to the landlord.

This condition of life is called serfdom; the vast majority of the Russian people lived in serfdom for the next two hundred years and more. It came about gradually, as an economic and military necessity. It is curious, however, that because of the unique conditions of its life, Russia developed differently from other European countries. In the early days, when serfdom was common in western Europe, no peasant was freer than the Russian; from the seventeenth century on, when serfs were being freed in some parts of Europe, when the rights of the individual were beginning to be recognized in many countries, the Russian peasants became little better than slaves.

Stenka Razin

THEY DID not submit to serfdom without a fight.

All along the southern frontiers lived the Cossacks, who still preserved the old Russian freedom; they paid no taxes and served no man. If a peasant could reach a Cossack camp or village he was safe, for even the Tsar's troops dared not pursue him there. During the century (roughly, between 1550 and 1650) when serfdom was being established, the Cossacks increased enormously in number; there were tens of thousands of horsemen in their armies. Along the Don and the Yaik, along the Dnieper, their communities grew, governed by popular assemblies and their elected headmen, whose symbol of office was a reed plucked from the river bank. Many a peasant, in spite of every law, escaped into the forest, hid in caves, made his way down the rivers, drawing his little dugout into the tall reeds if he saw anyone, until he reached the Cossack outposts.

The Cossack armies grew stronger all the time; they fought when and against whom they chose. They often fought for the Tsar, when they were called upon, but were quite capable of allying themselves with the Tartars against the Russians. They sometimes embarrassed the Russian government by making war when there was supposed to be peace. In 1637 they captured Azov, at the mouth of the Don, from the Turks and offered it to Tsar Mikhail. It was a most important place and very desirable to Russia, but Mikhail did not feel able to hold it and returned it with apologies to the Sultan.

In 1665 a Russian commander was leading a band of Cossack and Russian troops against the Poles. When autumn came the Cossack headman told the officer that his men wanted to go home to take in the harvest. The commander refused to let them go. The headman called his men together. "Brothers," he said, "we are free men. No one can tell a Cossack when to go and when to stay. Let us return to our homes." They wheeled their horses

and rode off, but the Russian officer sent troops after them, forced them to come back and hanged the headman.

The headman's younger brother was furious at this and vowed vengeance. His name was Stepan Razin, but he was always known as Stenka, or Steve. He knew that the peasants were ready to rebel against the laws of 1646 and he resolved to raise a great rebellion against officers and landlords and all who oppressed free men.

He started by becoming a pirate on the Volga. He stopped government boats carrying grain or prisoners of war, and merchant fleets carrying food or goods up or down the river. He took the goods, killed the men in charge, freed the prisoners and the crews, and said to them, "I am fighting only the boyars and the rich people, but with the common people and the poor I will share all that I have. If you join me you shall be a free Cossack." Naturally they joined him and his army grew, for he kept his word and was liberal with his booty. He sailed into the Caspian Sea with a fleet of thirty-five ships, then went up the Yaik River and took the city of Yaitsk and spent the winter there. In the spring he ravaged the Persian shores of the Caspian, carrying off a beautiful Persian princess.

In 1668 he felt strong enough to attack the strongly fortified city of Astrakhan at the mouth of the Volga. Like the False Dmitri, he sent powerful propaganda ahead of him, promising the people freedom from landlords and officials, promising soldiers good pay and booty and freedom from their commanders. The city was conquered before Stenka's fleet arrived: workmen, servants, slaves and soldiers rose up and killed their masters, crying out, "Now times are changed and we shall be the lords!" Stenka's army was received with delirious joy and the city was given over to rioting and pillage. The news flew through the country; serfs rose in rebellion and killed their landlords; the cities on the Volga opened their gates to the Cossacks. Stenka even produced a false Tsarevich and carried him up the river on a ship hung with crimson velvet. The revolt spread nearly

to Moscow; it was said that two hundred thousand people followed Stenka Razin.

He wanted all the people to live in freedom and equality as the Cossacks did. "I do not want to be your Tsar," he said to his followers, "but to live with you as a brother." But he was a Cossack, not a statesman; he did not know how to accomplish what he wanted. He was savagely cruel, slaughtering and torturing men, women and even children; after a victory all he could do was to enjoy the spoils and get riotously drunk, in Cossack fashion. Three years after his first piracy he was defeated at Simbirsk and fled down the Volga past the scenes of his triumphs; but it took another half year to put down the hordes of desperate serfs who had risen at his word. Armed only with farming tools, they were cut down by the Tsar's troops and treated with the same ferocious cruelty that Stenka had shown; thousands were hanged, impaled and beheaded and the rest slunk sullenly back into servitude. Stenka himself was finally caught and executed after frightful torture.

The revolt was useless but Stenka Razin has always been a hero to the Russian people because he championed the poor and the oppressed and because, having power, he wanted "to live with them as a brother." Many a song is sung about him still; the most famous is one about the Persian princess whom he captured.

As he sailed up the Volga, the song says, in a painted ship with silken sails, the princess at his side, his companions grumbled. "What has a Cossack to do with a sweetheart?" they asked each other. "He is getting soft and womanly, dallying with her. Capture a woman one day and drown her the next is the Cossack way." Stenka heard them and was angry at first. Then he rose and lifted the princess in his arms. "Mother Volga," he cried, "much gold and silver have I had from you, but never have I given aught to you. Take now this precious gift from a Cossack of the Don!" And he flung the princess into the river, to the great delight of his men.

At about this same time there was a terrible uprising of all the Cossacks in Ukraine, which was under Polish rule. For much the same reason as Stenka's — because he had been wronged by a Polish official — a Cossack headman named Bogdan Khmelnitsky roused the whole of Ukraine and got help from the Crimean Tartars. Serfdom had existed for a long time in Poland; the peasants were even worse off there than in Russia and thousands joined the Cossack armies. For a year and a half frightful civil war raged and the Cossacks threatened the Polish capital. Bogdan ruled over Ukraine, like a king; but, like Stenka Razin, he was not able to cope with the situation he himself had created. The Polish king made war on him again, his Tartar allies deserted him, as they were apt to do, and he was defeated.

This Polish revolt, however, had far-reaching results for Russia. When Bogdan was defeated he offered the whole of Ukraine to the Tsar of Russia in return for Russian help. This was a tempting offer, for Ukraine had once been the heart of the Russian land. Kiev was still its capital; the first Russian St. Sophia, built by Yaroslav, stood there and on either side of the Dnieper stretched the old provinces of Rus. Tsar Alexei, son of Mikhail Romanov, called a National Assembly to consider the question, for, of course, accepting Ukraine meant war with Poland. The great fortified city of Smolensk was still in Polish hands; this was another temptation, and the Assembly voted for war. The war lasted for thirteen years with varying fortunes; in the end, in 1667, Russia regained Smolensk, all of Ukraine that lay east of the Dnieper, and the city of Kiev, although it stood on the western bank.

Another very important result for Russia was that Poland, after these exhausting wars, never regained its former power; Sweden had also attacked it while it was fighting Russia and the Cossacks. The two Slav nations — whose lands adjoined, who might have become one nation except for the difference in religion — had struggled together for centuries, first one and

then the other prevailing. From this time on, Russia was unquestionably the stronger.

The Cossacks in Siberia

FORTUNATELY there was another outlet, besides revolt, for the Cossacks' energies and for oppressed serfs if they were able to escape. Yermak had opened the way into the largest piece of land ever given to one nation — Siberia, four thousand miles long at its longest, two thousand miles wide at its widest, a wilderness as large as a continent to explore and to exploit.

Very little was known about it when Yermak sent the first load of furs to Ivan the Terrible, but both Ivan and Boris realized its probable value and encouraged settlement and exploration. In 1586, under Ivan's son, the town of Tiumen was founded and the next year Tobolsk, on the Irtysh, was founded, which for a long time was the headquarters for Siberian affairs. In 1594 Tara was built on the Irtysh and, in Boris' reign, Tomsk on the Tom River that runs into the Ob. There was a pause during the Time of Troubles; then in 1618 Yeniseisk appeared, Krasnoyarsk in 1627, and in 1630 Yakutsk on the Lena. It is easy to see that the ending "sk" in Russian stands for town; many of these settlements were named for the river on which they were built.

They were frontier stockades, very much like the ones that the American pioneers built in Kentucky more than a hundred years later. There was an inner enclosure where ammunition and other stores were kept, where the military commander lived and where the church stood; outside this were the log cabins of the settlers and soldiers and around both was a strong stockade of logs. These outposts were called *ostrogs*. They were built for the protection of the settlers and to provide a center for the government of the new territory, but most of all as a center for the collection of taxes from the Russians and tribute from the native tribes; the collection of money being the chief passion and the greatest need of the government. Both taxes and tribute were

paid in furs. Each hunter gave a portion of his catch to the local governor, and the native villages gave their quota of furs to the greedy officials who penetrated every corner within their reach. They set aside the very best of the furs for the Tsar himself, to be sold or used by him.

There were tribes of native people scattered thinly all across the continent. In the west were the Samoyeds, a people related to the Finns; they lived in tents of skin or shelters made of branches and used the reindeer for food, for clothing and as beasts of burden. Farther east were the Tunguses, a Turkish people who had been driven north into the forests by the Mongol invasion; they were skillful and brave hunters but gentle and honest in their dealings with men; they yielded to the Russians and either paid tribute or went farther into the north or deeper into the forest to avoid them. Beyond the Tunguses were the Yakuts, a vigorous, energetic Turkish people who farmed and raised cattle and did not yield or pay tribute without a fight. In the Far East were the Ostyaks and the Chukchis who are so like the American Indians that many people believe they are the same people, some of whom went across the narrow seas and settled in North America. The wilderness was so vast that many of these tribesmen escaped the Russian invaders for a long time. Those who were along the line of march were terrified by firearms, as the Tartars had been in Yermak's day, especially of cannon, and paid tribute rather than have their villages burned down and their families slaughtered, which was the price of disobedience.

Fur was the most obvious wealth of the new land. Almost the whole of Siberia is forest: spruce and pine mingled with the white birch which is so familiar in the Russian landscape; in the center the broad-leaved trees appear, oak and maple, elm and linden; then comes the wooded steppe and, in the southwest, the open steppe: the same pattern of vegetation as in European Russia. Most of Siberia lies above the 55th degree of latitude, on which Moscow stands, and even above the latitude of Novgorod;

therefore winters are long and bitterly cold. Four thousand miles of forest were filled with little animals whose fur grew thick and fine to keep them warm all winter. There were innumerable sables — “a merry little beast it is,” says a traveler, “and a beautiful one. Its beauty comes with the snow and with the snow it goes.” There were black foxes and ermines, martens and beavers, wolves and bears with coarser pelts and, in the far north, white foxes and polar bears.

These multitudes of little creatures had seen so few men that at first they did not run away but came boldly into the hunters’ tents for scraps of food; but soon, as millions of their soft skins were sent westward into Russia, their numbers lessened and they fled at the first sight of man. And men pursued them and were led farther and farther afield, into the desolate north, into the endless east.

Wild as the country was, however, and far as they might be from any human community, the scene was familiar to the pioneers: the same unbroken stretch of forest, cut by broad winding rivers, that they knew at home. They went across the whole length of Siberia in boats.

This may seem surprising at first sight of a map, for one naturally exclaims, “But all the rivers in Siberia run from south to north! How then could men travel on them from west to east?” The answer is simple: all the great rivers — the Ob, the Yenisei, the Lena — and many smaller ones, although they run north, have many tributaries flowing into them from the west and the east out of the forested plains, and the land is so flat that these tributaries often rise or in their wanderings flow within a few miles of one another. The Ob and the Yenisei, for example, are only five miles apart, by way of their tributaries, and the Yenisei, by way of the Lower and the Upper Tunguska rivers, comes close to the Lena. Most Russians were as much at home on the water as they were on the land, for they had traveled by river and used portages from one stream to another since the beginning of their history; and none knew the ways of rivers better than the Cos-

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sacks, who took their very names from the great rivers of Russia.

The Cossacks were attracted to the unlimited freedom and adventure of Siberia; bands of them — sometimes ten, sometimes forty, fifty or a hundred — traveled along the rivers and with unbelievable speed reached the edges of the continent. Only fifty years after Yermak crossed the Urals, Yakutsk was built on the Lena. But at that point an unexpected obstacle met them: the few tributary rivers that flowed from the east dashed down from the high, cold Verkhoyansk Mountains which rose beyond the Lena, instead of meandering out from flat, wooded land as rivers should. The immemorial method of travel from one river to another could not be used. Were the Cossacks dismayed? Not at all. With their usual boldness they used an entirely new way. In their small river boats they sailed down the Lena into the Arctic Ocean, turned eastward and sailed up the Yana, the Indigirka and the Kolyma rivers from their mouths, maneuvering among the dangerous ice floes of the Arctic Ocean and finishing the exploration as if they had sailed on oceans all their lives.

In June, 1648, a Cossack named Dezhnev went still farther: he started from the mouth of the Kolyma River and, braving the open ocean, passed round the easternmost cape of Asia and through the strait between Asia and America, landing in October at the mouth of the Anadyr River. No one knew until then whether the two continents were separated by a strait or joined by an isthmus. Dezhnev sent a report of his amazing journey to the Governor at Yakutsk who lost it among his other papers; therefore the strait was named for Bering (a Danish-born officer in the Russian navy), who rediscovered it eighty years after Dezhnev's voyage.

The hardships of these journeys, so briefly told, were incredible and could probably not have been endured by anyone less hardy and less bold than a Cossack. The rivers led them into the north where the cold was fearful, for Yakutia is colder than the Pole itself. In the spring the rivers were jammed with blocks of ice

that piled up one on another as the swollen waters carried them to the sea; after that came floods as the snow and ice melted. The pioneers had to use the brief summer for travel and to build cabins where they could spend the long, dark, lonely winters. They were often thousands of miles from any human help; they suffered hunger, accident, attack from native tribes, while their own unruly passions often led to quarreling and death. Many expeditions never returned; many returned with a tenth of the number that had set out. Yet these little bands of men penetrated to the ends of Asia and set up their ostrogs, where Russian church domes rose and the Tsar's commanders received taxes and tribute. A Cossack had given Siberia to Russia; Cossacks established the thinly spread empire of the Tsars to the borders of China, Mongolia and the Pacific and Arctic oceans.

They traveled into the north and the northeast because the rivers led them there and because, if they had gone due east, they would have found themselves among high and difficult mountains to which they were not accustomed. Besides, on the steppe to the south there were many wandering tribes of Mongols and other Tartars who, although they were no longer the terror they had once been, would have outnumbered the little bands of explorers and halted them; and still farther south lay the mighty Chinese Empire which they did not wish to offend. However, rumors reached them of a southern river that ran to the east instead of north, through fertile valleys where grain could grow, and they had great need of grain. This river was the Amur, the fourth great river of Siberia, which runs into the Sea of Okhotsk.

The Cossacks could not keep away from it. In spite of the danger of being outnumbered by Mongols and Chinese, they found the headwaters of the Amur, reaching them, as usual, by water, and sailed down it, finding its basin as beautiful and as fruitful as it was rumored to be. In 1644, and again in 1651, Cossack ships reached the mouth of the great river, fighting here and there along their way; both times, because the current

was too swift for them to return upstream, they took their little ships into the Sea of Okhotsk and returned to Yakutsk by that dangerous route. But even Cossacks could not have their way when the great Manchu Emperor Kang-hi was on the throne of China; he protested against their trespassing on territory which he considered his; envoys from Peking and from Moscow met at Nerchinsk on the river Shilka, in 1689, and the Russians were ordered off the Amur. A boundary line was drawn between the two empires, north and west of the Amur basin.

At the very end of the century, in 1697, a band of Cossacks started from the lonely ostrog of Anadyrsk and explored the whole peninsula of Kamchatka, bringing back fine and rare furs.

Each one of these journeys deserves a chapter or a whole book to itself but here, alas, they can only be recorded thus briefly, since the claiming and the exploration of Siberia is but one of the important things that happened in Russia during the seventeenth century. Some of the most daring explorers were peasants or sons of peasants who had migrated or escaped from Russia. Their courage and imagination, their ability to command and to act, make one realize how many other men of equally fine character and ability must have been wasted, their spirits crushed under the unbearable burden of serfdom.

Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich

TSAR ALEXEI, who reigned from 1645 to 1676, was a kindly and lovable man although, like many another Tsar, he had occasional fits of temper. Serfdom, which was established in his reign, was not held against him, for it was the end of a long, slow process and there seemed to be no other solution for the difficult economic problems of the country. The peasants never blamed the Tsar, because they never saw him; to them he was God's representative on earth, their "Little Father," who wished them well. They blamed the men they knew: their landlords,

the innumerable officials who demanded more and more taxes, the boyars and princes who galloped by them in rich sleighs, buried in furs. It was against these men, never against their rightful Tsars, that they rebelled. Alexei is still remembered with affection because he was the last of the great Tsars of Muscovy, stout and dignified, wearing the jewel-incrusted Byzantine robes, who sat on the high throne in the gorgeous, low-vaulted halls of the Kremlin.

He was a liberal Tsar, however, and welcomed foreigners and foreign knowledge to Moscow. After having to look eastward for so long, keeping watch against the Tartars, Russia now, with the vast security of Siberia behind it, turned to the west.

There were both help and danger in the West. Most Russians looked distrustfully at other Europeans because they were not Orthodox; they had impious customs such as shaving men's beards, they wore strange clothes and knew too many things that were not contained in the Bible. But a few men, and among them was Tsar Alexei, realized that Russia could not hold its own in the West unless it had an army that was as well equipped and trained as European armies were; that it could not even trade profitably with the West if it were far behind the rest of Europe in every kind of technical knowledge. Besides, they liked many things that came from the West: entertaining books and plays, which did not exist in Russia, paintings and music, comfortable carriages, clocks, watches and so forth. The regaining of Kiev after so many centuries brought Western learning into Russia, for Kiev had absorbed a great deal of Polish culture; schools were there where Latin and German were taught, and the Russian Orthodox families who still lived in and around the old city were more civilized than those who had remained in Russia.

Ivan the Great had brought architects and jewelers from Italy; Ivan the Terrible had welcomed the English merchants; Boris Godunov had educated his son to speak several languages. Mikhail and Alexei invited foreign officers to come and train Russian soldiers in the European way of fighting, for up to this

time they had fought, like Tartars, in hordes, using mostly the bow and arrow, knowing how to surround or outflank an enemy, how to ambush and overcome by mere number, but unable to fight in close, even ranks or to maneuver as only trained troops could do. Their firearms and artillery were not so good as the European and most of what they had came from abroad.

Most of these foreign officers were Germans. Their homes were in a suburb of Moscow where other foreigners lived: Dutch and Swiss, English and Scottish merchants or skilled workmen, or families who had fled from the same religious persecutions that sent so many settlers to America. These people lived in neat, pretty, brick or wooden houses surrounded by flower gardens and green lawns. Many Russian men liked to visit these houses, where the women sat beside them at dinner and danced with them afterward to gay music or played cards or got up little theatrical entertainments. Several ministers of the Tsar, some of whom had gone on embassies to other countries, furnished their houses in the foreign style with paintings and comfortable furniture and had libraries of foreign books. The Tsar himself enjoyed these things and in his favorite country palace, a few miles from Moscow, he turned one of the halls into a theater and got a company of Germans to act plays for him. But only religious plays, based on Biblical stories, were allowed. This was fifty years after the death of Shakespeare.

During Alexei's reign several very fine men took part in the government, perhaps because, under this kindly Tsar, it was not so dangerous a thing to do as it usually was. It took courage to be a leader of any kind, for if a man made a false move, lost a battle, angered a Tsar or even the relative of a Tsar, he might easily be banished to a cabin on the Arctic Circle with all his family, or be beheaded, flogged to death or broken on the wheel; for high birth or position did not save a man from any of these punishments. The women of a disgraced family were usually forced to enter a convent. Alexei's mild rule showed that there

were statesmen ready to serve their country if their country desired them to do so.

There was Rtishchev, one of the Tsar's closest advisers, who always tried to make peace between quarreling factions yet supported every forward-looking act; a true Christian who, on one long journey, took into his carriage so many beggars and cripples that he himself had to get out and ride horseback; who founded a hospital and persuaded the Tsar to build more; who freed all his household serfs and treated his peasants with justice and kindness, asking his children to do the same after his death, "for they are all our brethren."

There was Ordyn-Nashchokin, son of a poor state servitor of Pskov; he became foreign minister after making the peace treaty with Poland in 1667 and serving as military governor of several cities. This man, with a fine mind, an impatient and caustic tongue, wished his country to learn quickly from the West; for he himself, living so close to the border, had been educated in Western ways and knew Latin, German, Polish, and mathematics. He had great ambitions for Russia: he wanted to regain the Baltic coast in order to have an open doorway into Europe, and he dreamed of a Slavic empire which would include the Slavic peoples conquered by Turkey, as well as Russians and Poles. He was that rare thing, a statesman with a conscience: Alexei broke the treaty that had been made with Poland, and Ordyn-Nashchokin resigned his office and entered a monastery.

There was Prince Vasili Golitsyn, whose magnificent house, furnished in Western style with mirrors, portraits, clocks and a fine library, was a meeting place for foreign envoys and travelers. He believed that Russia should have a trained army; that the serfs should be freed and given the land they lived on, in which case, he said, they could pay a large enough tax to support the army.

There was also Matveyev, who married a Scottish woman, to whose house the genial Tsar often came to listen to concerts, to

see little plays and to enjoy the company of the foreign ladies in the pretty flowered dresses that showed their arms and shoulders and trim waists. Among these ladies was young Natalia Naryshkin, the daughter of a friend of Matveyev's; she was a pretty, dark-eyed girl and the Tsar was pleased by her modest manners and her straightforward answers to his questions. "I will find you a worthy bridegroom for your pretty guest," he said to Matveyev one evening as he left the house.

The bridegroom proved to be no less a person than the Tsar himself. Alexei's wife had died, leaving two sickly sons and six healthy daughters, and the Tsar feared there might be trouble again about the succession after his death. Therefore, much to the disgust of his daughters, some of whom were older than his bride, and of their mother's family who feared they would lose their power, he married Natalia Naryshkin.

He had chosen well; in June, 1672, his young wife brought into the world a vigorous baby who, one bright summer day, was borne in his cradle along the broad avenues and squares of the Kremlin, accompanied by a gorgeous procession of priests carrying icons and banners, of boyars and courtiers, of ladies walking under veiled canopies, while the great bells rang out overhead, to the Monastery of the Miracles. There he was christened Pëtr Alexeyevich Romanov, and after the christening, the Tsar gave a magnificent banquet to boyars and princes, to merchants and officials, while the Tsaritsa entertained their wives and daughters in the terem, for they were well pleased by the advent of this fine boy. Even the baby must have been pleased, for all his life Peter * dearly loved a celebration.

** The rulers of Russia, from Peter's time on, belong to European and world history. Therefore their more familiar names, the Anglicized forms, are used, rather than the unfamiliar Pëtr, Yekaterina, etc.*



CHAPTER XII

PETER THE GREAT

His Boyhood

ALEXEI MIKHAILOVITCH DIED when he was only forty-seven years old, leaving a strange family behind him.

Peter, his youngest son, was four years old, a pretty boy with dark eyes and dark curly hair like his mother's; he used to follow his father on state occasions in a little carriage drawn by four ponies and driven by dwarfs, given him by Matveyev. He was a favorite at the Court and had his own apartments in the palace, where he lived with his nurses and governess.

Peter's half-brother, Alexei's oldest son, Feodor, succeeded his father; he was so ill that he had to rule his empire from his couch most of the time and it was known that he could not live long. He was Peter's godfather and was kind to him; so was Alexei's other son, Ivan, who was half-blind, lame and feeble-minded, a gentle fellow who liked to play with his little half-brother. But in

the somber, low-vaulted, candlelit rooms of the terem, the women's apartments, there were six daughters of Alexei who did not love Peter nor any member of his family. Foremost among them was Sophia, a strong-willed, thickset, ugly young woman, several years older than Feodor. She was ambitious and did not mean to wear her life out in the terem. Her family now held all the important positions at court. Natalia, Peter's mother, spent most of her time in Alexei's favorite villa, Preobrazhenskoe, a few miles from Moscow, and her family and friends were banished to distant places.

In May, 1682, however, Tsar Feodor died, leaving no son. Which of his two brothers should be Tsar? The Patriarch and boyars chose Peter, now a brilliant, healthy boy of ten, rather than the feeble Ivan; then they went to the balcony overlooking the Kremlin Square, where the people had assembled. "Which of the two Tsareviches do you want to rule over you?" they cried, and everywhere shouts arose, "Peter Alexeievich! Peter Alexeievich!" Only a few voices called for Ivan. It was not a National Assembly that chose, but merely a Moscow crowd.

Peter, therefore, was Tsar and his mother's family returned to power. Sophia was furious. At Feodor's funeral she wept bitterly and said to the people as she came out of the church, "Behold, our brother, the Tsar Feodor, has gone from the world, poisoned by his enemies! Have pity on us orphans! Our brother has not been chosen Tsar; we have no mother, father nor brother to care for us!"

This clever speech made the people suspect Peter's family and aroused sympathy for Sophia at the same time, but she did not stop at that or at shedding tears. There was another way to get the power that she longed to wield. The Streltsy, the regiments of infantry that guarded Moscow, could be used for that purpose. They were ignorant soldiers, always discontented because they rarely got their pay on time and because their boyar officers were apt to use them as serfs when they were not on duty. Rumors were started among the Streltsy by Sophia's family:

"The Tsar's family, the Naryshkins, poisoned Feodor and are going to poison Ivan, too. . . The Naryshkins will punish the Streltsy for their complaints. . . . They are going to rule as they please. . . . They say that Ivan Naryshkin tried on the Tsar's crown and said that it fitted him well. . . . They are going to kill the Tsarevnas!"

On May 25th, early in the morning, a man ran breathlessly into the Kremlin to the palace steps and gasped, "The Streltsy are rising! They are coming to the palace!" He had hardly finished when a mob of Streltsy, carrying their banners and beating their drums, filled the square, shouting, "Give us the Naryshkins! They have killed the Tsarevich! Death to the traitors!" Matveyev, Natalia's foster-father, who had just returned from exile, went out on the Red Staircase, the handsome outer stairway leading from the palace to a square, and told them that Ivan was alive and well; Natalia led both Ivan and Peter out and showed them to the furious mob, who climbed up and looked closely at both boys. They seemed to be satisfied but, unfortunately, one of their own officers, thinking that the danger was over, spoke roughly to them and ordered them to go home and attend to their duties.

This roused all their passions and their discontent again; they seized the officer and threw him down into the square, where he was caught on the soldiers' pikes and cut to pieces; then they rushed up the stairs and into the palace. The noble Matveyev, a dignified old man, was seized and flung into the square and killed, though Natalia herself tried to protect him; the soldiers swarmed through the palace, killed two of Natalia's brothers and four or five other boyars, dragging their bodies into the street and cutting them to pieces.

For three days the Streltsy ran riot in Moscow, killing, torturing and burning; another of Natalia's brothers and many other nobles and courtiers were killed. Then the soldiers assembled again in the Kremlin and said, "Now we are satisfied; we have punished the traitors. We are ready to die for the Tsar, the Tsar-itsa, the Tsarevich and the Tsarevnas!" It was easy to see who

was responsible for this unjustified horror and slaughter, for the Streltsy demanded that Ivan be made Tsar as well as Peter and that Sophia be Regent and rule in their names until they were of age. Their demands were granted. Natalia was given the villa at Preobrazhenskoe and lived there with her children, not at all sure that worse harm would not befall them.

Peter had seen all this: he had seen his dear Matveyev dragged out and thrown on the soldiers' pikes, and had lived, with his trembling mother, through the three-days' man hunt. He had looked calmly at the Streltsy and had shown no fear, but, like the little Ivan who became the Terrible, he was affected by these scenes throughout his life. He hated the Kremlin and Moscow itself; and he hated the Streltsy. A nervous twitching of his face and limbs, which was noticeable all his life, was probably caused by this experience.

He could forget these horrors, however, at Preobrazhenskoe. It was a pleasant place, near woods and meadows, at the edge of a village and near the German suburb. All these places Peter explored, looking especially into every workshop, for he loved to use his hands; he took any mechanical thing apart and put it together again and was forever building things with wood, happy when he had a hammer in his hands. But his first interest was in anything military; from the time he was eleven years old he began to order military supplies from the government stores and to play at soldiers. It was very serious play, however, not at all childish. His soldiers were men and his guns went off.

In any Tsar's palace there were innumerable servants, attendants and courtiers. At Preobrazhenskoe there were hundreds of stableboys, huntsmen, falconers, grooms and dog keepers, besides the house servants. There were also sons of nobles and gentry who were sent to attend a Tsarevich or, in this case, a young Tsar. All of these Peter, a tall, strong-willed, energetic boy, drilled and formed into a regiment which he called Preobrazhenski. It was for them that he sent orders to the government for muskets, ammunition and cannon. Sophia and her advisers

called them Peter's "play soldiers" and humored him, glad to have him kept busy and away from the Kremlin; but the nobles who did not like Sophia and her family watched the young Tsar and sent their sons to serve him.

Peter got some officers from the German suburb to train his regiment and he entered the ranks, first as drummer and then as bombardier; he did sentry duty and went on long marches, keeping up with the best of them. When he was thirteen he had a fort built on the bank of the Yauza River; this his regiment attacked and defended in turn, so earnestly that men were wounded and sometimes killed in the mock battles.

These absorbing activities were interrupted now and then when Peter had to go to Moscow, dress in his stiff robes of state and sit on the double throne that had been made for him and Ivan; both were crowned, both held a globe and scepter. There was a hole in the back of the throne, covered with a little curtain; Sophia sat concealed there and told the boys what to say. Ivan sat with his head lowered and scarcely spoke, but Peter, his eyes sparkling, his cheeks flushed, sat on the edge of the throne and often had to be restrained by the solemn courtiers from asking too many questions, especially when a foreign ambassador was presented. He looked only a year, instead of six years, younger than Ivan.

His great joy was to visit the German suburb where all the foreigners lived. When he was fifteen he heard about a surveying instrument and was given one, but no one knew how to use it except a certain Dutch merchant. So Peter went hot-foot over to the German suburb and begged the Dutchman to show him how to use it. "Surely," said the merchant, "but your Majesty must know mathematics and geometry first." Peter had been taught to read and write, not very well, and to read music, but hardly anyone in Russia knew even simple arithmetic; they used the abacus — a little frame holding wires on which beads were strung — and calculated quickly and accurately with it, as the Chinese do. Peter loved to learn: he set himself to study mathe-

metics, laboring with grimy hands over his notebook, like many another boy. The Dutchman became his good friend and that same year another exciting thing happened.

They were exploring, as Peter loved to do, the storerooms and workshops on an estate he had inherited, when they came on an old boat different from any the boy had ever seen. "It is an English boat," said the Dutchman. "It can sail either with the wind or against it and go in any direction you please." "Against the wind!" cried Peter, who had seen only the flat-bottomed barges that were used on Russian rivers. "How is that possible?" The old boat was taken out and repaired; the mast was set up and sails fitted; then it was launched on the Yauza River and the Dutchman sailed it up and down, tacking and turning, while Peter watched from the bank. But he was not one to watch anything for very long. "Stop!" he shouted. "Bring it here at once and let me get in!" And in he got, took the tiller himself and sailed the boat; and there was born in him a love of boats and of the water that never left him. The little boat is still kept and is known as "the grandfather of the Russian Navy."

When Peter was seventeen he was as tall and strong as any man. He began to resent Sophia's rule. He knew well enough what was going on: that Prince Vasili Golitsyn was Sophia's lover and was the real ruler of Russia; that Golitsyn had led two disastrous campaigns against the Crimean Tartars and had lost most of his army and supplies on the steppe. Shortly after the second of these failures Peter, Ivan and Sophia were taking part in a ceremonial procession in one of the churches of the Kremlin. Peter ordered Sophia not to walk with him and Ivan; she did not obey him and he left the church in anger. Sophia knew that this was a declaration of war between them.

After that, she kept a strong guard of Streltsy about her, and rumors began to fly around Moscow and Preobrazhenskoe: that Sophia was going to have herself crowned; that she was planning to murder Peter and his mother; that Peter was going to murder her and Ivan. In August Sophia planned to make a pil-

grimace to a monastery near Moscow and ordered a strong guard of Streltsy to accompany her. This was enough to turn excitement into hysteria: two spies of Peter's galloped out in the middle of the night to Preobrazhenskoe, burst into Peter's room and waked him, crying, "The Streltsy are marching against you! Fly for your life!" Peter, with the nightmarish memories of the former uprising in mind, leaped from bed, had a horse saddled and rode off to the Troitsa monastery, where his friends and family followed him.

For the next month a tug of war, a struggle of wills, went on between brother and sister, between Peter at the Troitsa and Sophia in the Kremlin. Peter, as Tsar, ordered the Streltsy to appear before him and some of them did, although Sophia threatened them with death. His own regiments came to him, of course; officers and nobles who preferred him to Sophia came to the Troitsa, and the great monastery became an armed camp. Then Peter ordered the foreign officers of the regular army to come to him and they obeyed.

That ended the struggle; Golitsyn and the commander of the Streltsy knew that they had lost and surrendered to him. Golitsyn was exiled to a miserable village in the province of Archangel and the commander was tortured and then beheaded. Peter would not return to Moscow until Sophia had gone into a convent; then he entered the city, embraced his brother Ivan, and became Tsar in fact, as he had been hitherto only in name. This was in September, 1689, when he was seventeen.

His Youth

For a full five years after that event, Peter spent his time in drilling his troops, building ships and amusing himself with his friends, doing all these things with his usual energy and gusto.

After his first experiment in sailing, he had gone to a large lake near Pereyaslavl — the widest piece of water within easy reach of Moscow — and had a small fleet of ships built there un-

der the direction of foreign builders, with the labor of Russian serfs. He himself cut down trees, sawed, hammered and planed, and his great delight was to sail about on the lake. His mother worried about him, for this was no way for a Tsar to behave; she persuaded him to marry, hoping that a wife might keep him at home. But she was disappointed in this hope, for Peter cared nothing for his pretty, old-fashioned little wife and was hardly ever at home. He managed to go up to Archangel, where he first smelled salt water and saw the sea-going vessels of foreign countries. He had ships built there, too, ordered a galley from Holland and nearly drowned himself cruising on the White Sea.

He had made great friends among the foreigners and was constantly with them, feasting, drinking, dancing and talking late into the night. He learned to speak both Dutch and German fairly well. Since he preferred the German suburb to the Kremlin, he had a large house built for his best friend, a Swiss named Le Fort, and there he entertained his friends and officers, sometimes two or three hundred at a time. Le Fort had a clever young lackey named Alexander Menshikov, who became a great friend of Peter's and was closely associated with him all his life. Their amusements were not always admirable: they delighted in rough practical jokes, such as stuffing down a man's throat some food or drink that particularly revolted him; they got up masquerades and went through the streets in carriages drawn by pigs, goats and cows, a naked Bacchus sprawled over a cask of wine and other scandalous figures in his train. They drank heavily, as was the custom in Russia, since eating and drinking were about the only pleasures the Orthodox Church allowed. It was the custom to keep guests, by force if necessary, until they had drunk enough to lay them under the table, whence their servants carried them home. Peter, fast growing into the six feet seven and a half inches that he attained as a man, drank and caroused with the best of them. He particularly loved fireworks, which he made and set off himself and used for every celebration. He was still a great boy.

He was brought suddenly into action when he was twenty-three. No peace was possible with the Crimean Tartars; the two campaigns of Prince Golitsyn were only incidents in a warfare that never ended. Peter's advisers decided to attack Azov, a fortified town near the mouth of the Don River, which commanded the entrance to the Sea of Azov. It belonged to the Turks, who supported the Tartars. Peter agreed to this plan with enthusiasm; he had not built ships to sail them on lakes and rivers, for he knew that Russia must get out to the seas into which its rivers ran if it were ever to become a powerful, self-supporting nation. "Hitherto," he wrote exultantly to a friend, "we have amused ourselves with the game of Mars. Now we shall play it in earnest at Azov."

The campaign, however, was again disastrous: a hundred and twenty thousand men were sent south, some marching the whole way, some going on barges down the rivers. Peter went as a bombardier sergeant in his pet Preobrazhenski regiment. The march was hard: supplies and ammunition were lost or left behind; the route was marked with the bodies of men and horses. At Azov the Russian army was far from its base while the Turks were at home and reinforcements were sent freely to them by sea. Peter worked as hard as the common soldiers did, suffering with them first from extreme cold and then from extreme heat; he took part also in the war councils, for nothing could be done without his consent. The army left Moscow in February, 1695; it returned in December, having failed.

But now Peter showed his quality. He had seen that Azov could not be taken while the Turks could come and go by sea. He had played with boats; now he would use them. During the winter of 1696 he had a fleet of ships built at Voronezh on the Don. Thirty thousand men, partly soldiers, partly serfs commandeered from the surrounding country, built shipyards, barracks and ships, during the frozen winter. Great monasteries and nobles were ordered to send men and to have ships built at their own expense. Carpenters were brought from Archangel,

foreign builders were hired. The galley he had ordered from Holland, the boats he had built on the Pereyaslavl Lake were brought overland on sledges and men were trained to man them. Peter was everywhere, ordering, hammering, inspecting.

In April, when the ice melted, three galleys were launched; by the end of May, twenty-nine galleys sailed down the Don. At the end of July Azov surrendered to the Tsar.

This was Russia's first naval battle since the time of Igor, an almost incredible feat. Prince Golitsyn must have heard of it in his wretched Siberian cabin, for the whole of Russia rang with the news of the victory. In October Moscow celebrated it. Triumphant arches were erected, the streets were filled with joyful crowds, every bell rang as the military and naval procession entered the city. The commanders of the army and the admiral of the new navy were driven in gilded carriages; fine uniforms and polished weapons glittered; but where was the Tsar? "Look!" the people said to one another. "Can that be the Tsar? It is! Whoever saw the like?" For there, in the uniform of a ship's captain, walking behind the carriage of Admiral Le Fort, was the towering figure of the Autocrat of all the Russias!

He did a still more surprising thing the next year. He had a port now on the Sea of Azov which led into the Black Sea and he longed to open the old trade routes to the south. But Turkey would not allow any foreign ship to enter the Black Sea. "I would sooner permit outsiders to enter my harem," said the Sultan, "than consent to the sailing of foreign vessels on the Black Sea. Beware! Not without reason is it called Black." However, Peter thought, if all the European nations would join together to fight the Turks, they might drive them off both sea and land. For this he would need a larger fleet and the best warships. He could not depend forever on foreign builders; Russians must learn to build and to sail ships. In the spring of 1697 he sent a great embassy into Europe, with two purposes: to persuade the rulers of other countries to fight the Turks and to learn how to build ships. Le Fort led the embassy with two distinguished

Russians. There were about fifty-five others, largely old playmates of Peter's, and among them was a tall young man called Peter Mikhailov. For the Tsar, too, was going abroad, but he wanted to be free to work and to explore; he was going incognito.

It was hard to hide a man nearly seven feet tall, especially when all of Europe was agog to see him. What was he like, this young Tsar who had built a fleet overnight and had beaten the Turks? Was he a Tartar? How would he dress? How would he behave? No Tsar had ever left his country before; he was as strange and interesting a sight as the Emperor of China might have been. What they actually saw was a handsome, strong young man dressed rather carelessly in European clothes; whose face twitched rather terrifyingly when he was excited but who, otherwise, had frank and pleasant manners (although he did not know what to do with a table napkin); who was eager to see everything, full of curiosity and admiration, and was always asking, "What is that? How does it work? Let me see it!" Sometimes, in private interviews with other monarchs, he was the Tsar of all the Russias; once, at a state banquet, he stood behind Le Fort's chair as a footman because he wanted to hear what was going on, while the guests tried to pretend that the Tsar was in Moscow. His status was, to say the least, ambiguous.

He found that the other rulers had no interest in fighting Turkey, so he turned to his second purpose.

He went to Holland, where he settled down to the business of shipbuilding. He went first to a village near Amsterdam, but such crowds gathered to see him that he left angrily and went to Amsterdam, where the Dutch East India Company gave him a house in their own dockyards and let him work undisturbed. For four months he and Menshikov and a few other friends worked there, dressed in the broad breeches and the shirts of Dutch workmen, and learned every detail of shipbuilding.

He found time to visit museums, factories, workshops of every kind, and spent his fantastic energy on all sorts of things. He

learned cobbling well enough to make himself a pair of slippers; he made paper and produced an etching; he picked up a bit of dentistry and practised on his friends. He looked with amazement at the orderly, pretty houses and the happy, healthy faces of the Dutch workmen and farmers. Here were no desperate, starved peasants living like animals. He knew that the people here were healthy and happy because Holland was a great trading country and had fleets on all the seas; that its fast-growing empire in the East Indies produced spices, tea, coffee and cotton that filled the people's pockets with money. He thought of his own abundant land, blocked on all sides except the north where the harbors were frozen most of the year; there was not a Russian ship on any sea.

He heard, in Holland, that the English knew even more about shipbuilding than the Dutch did, especially the theory and principles of it. So he went to England, where King William gave him his best yacht as a gift and lent him a pleasant house which Peter, with his carousings, left a wreck. There he worked for several more months as hard as he had done in Holland. There, too, he found time to observe and to explore. Wishing to keep his incognito, he watched the deliberations of the House of Commons through a window in the roof — a strange sight and a strange position for a Tsar of Russia. But he was not much interested in government. Both in Holland and England he sought out men who could be useful to Russia: workmen, engineers, navigators, surgeons, chemists, sailors. He made contracts with them for so many years and sent hundreds of them back to Moscow.

After leaving England he went to Austria, which lay closest to Turkey and might therefore help him against the common enemy, but he found the Emperor more anxious to make peace than war. From Vienna he meant to go to the third great shipbuilding center, Venice; but he was called back to Moscow by alarming news. The Streltsy were rising in revolt! All Peter's nightmarish memories awoke. "I hear," he wrote to his chief

minister, "that the seed of the Miloslavski [Sophia's family] is sprouting. I beg you to be severe, for in no other way can this flame be put out. . . . We shall be with you sooner than you think."

As a matter of fact, the revolt was not a very serious matter, except for the Streltsy. Several regiments of them had fought at Azov and had been kept there at backbreaking work, building fortifications in the extremes of summer heat and winter cold. They were never paid on time and their life was far from pleasant. In the spring of 1697 they were ordered to go to the frontier of Poland, but the long march did not pass through Moscow, where their homes and families were, whom they had not seen for years. Some of them deserted and came to Moscow to present their grievances, but no one wanted to listen. These men brought disquieting news when they returned to their regiments: the Tsar had been away for more than a year; no one knew where he was; some said that he was a prisoner in Sweden, some that he had given up the Orthodox faith and become a German; and meanwhile the boyars were ruling. Rumor led to rioting; rioting led to open revolt; the Streltsy turned and marched toward Moscow. They were easily stopped and about two thousand prisoners were taken, many of whom were tortured and executed at once.

Peter returned when it was all over, but he was not satisfied; he was sure that Sophia's family and she herself were behind the uprising, and he had the same frantic fear of treason that Ivan the Terrible had. The imprisoned Streltsy were brought out and submitted to torture: to "the question," as it was called. The possibility of this "question" was a chance that anyone must face if he dared to do anything but obey. If a serf protested against impossible burdens, if a soldier asked for his pay, if a noble suggested a new law or dared to become a leader, if a bishop or a Metropolitan rebuked a Tsar, this might be in store for him.

There were three kinds of questioning: the rods, the knout and the fire. In the first, a man was laid on the floor while two men,

one at his head and the other at his feet, beat him with small rods, renewing them as often as they wore out. The knout was a hard thong of leather two or three feet long, about an inch wide, fastened to a leather whip which in turn was fastened to a wooden handle. A master executioner could kill a man with fifteen or twenty blows of it, leaping forward with each blow to give it greater force; or, if torture was the purpose, he could cut the flesh to the bone from shoulder to waist, never striking twice in the same place. Sometimes the victim's hands were tied behind his back; he was hoisted off his feet by his hands, his arms being thus dislocated at the shoulders; and in this agonizing position he was beaten. If this was not enough to make him confess anything, he was tied to a sort of spit and his torn, bleeding back was laid over a slow fire. All the while the questioner stood, directing the torture. It is hard to believe that confessions extorted in this way were taken seriously.

All this was done, in the pleasant suburb of Preobrazhenskoe, to the Streltsy who had wanted to see their families. They confessed nothing. Their obstinacy did not convince Peter; it infuriated him. Torture was applied more fiercely, Peter, his friends and councillors directing it themselves; finally the men were executed, by hundreds. Some were beheaded, some hanged all along the walls of Moscow; some broken on the wheel. This European punishment had replaced impalement: the victim was fastened to a horizontal wheel, his limbs were broken one by one and finally his back. It was not a great improvement. Peter made his courtiers take part in the executions and invited foreign ambassadors to watch them; then they went back to the palace to the celebrations in honor of the Tsar's return.

Although there was no actual proof that Sophia had had any part in the trouble, Peter made her become a nun. Hitherto she had just been living, very comfortably, in a convent. He also sent his wife to a convent, and so finally was rid of her. She had borne him a son, Alexei, who was the heir to the throne.

Peter the Great

THE TSAR soon showed what he had learned abroad, for he immediately set about the task of pulling his huge country out of Asia and into Europe. He started in small ways, by issuing decrees ordering men to shave their beards, to wear Western dress and to cut off their long robes at the knee. If they did not want to, it was done for them at the city gates, where they were made to kneel down and have their robes cut and were then handed over to the barber. He ordered women to appear at court functions, to put off their voluminous skirts and overdresses and to put on the pretty, revealing Western clothes. Some men and women rejoiced at the change, but to many men the loss of their beards was an unholy act, the destruction of something that God had given and that man had no right to take away. But Peter had no mercy; only peasants and priests might keep their beards; on all others a heavy tax was laid, if they wanted to keep them.

He further offended their religious feelings by decreeing that at the beginning of the new century, 1700, the year would begin on January 1st instead of September 1st, which had always been New Year's Day in Russia. There were murmurs and protests; many people had disapproved of Peter's going abroad and of his foreign friends; many priests feared for the Orthodox faith and the more fanatic called him Anti-Christ. But Peter's will prevailed.

His most serious concern was to make the army European. He already had two regiments, well-trained and officered, which had grown out of his "play soldiers." There must be more. He ordered every monastery and every bishopric, every noble and landowner to send a certain number of men, according to the number of serfs they possessed. He swept into his army all the unregistered vagabonds and hangers-on that could be found, and offered good pay to volunteers. He put them all into uniform and had them mercilessly drilled to stand and march in line, to charge, to shoot, to maneuver, to obey every word of com-

mand. In three months, in the winter of 1700, he had trained an army of thirty-two thousand men which could be reinforced by thousands of Cossacks and Tartars who were allowed to fight as they pleased. In his army, rank and birth did not count; officers were made and promoted according to their ability, and sons of nobles started as privates. They were soon called upon to fight a war that suited Peter's purposes very well.

Sweden, under the leadership of two strong kings, had become a powerful nation. At this time it held the whole of Finland and the Baltic coast as far as Riga, for Russia had never regained what it lost during the Time of Troubles. Above all things Peter wanted ports on the Baltic Sea, so that Russian ships might sail to Europe and sell their goods where they pleased. Poland, Denmark and the German state of Brandenburg also had grievances against Sweden; they proposed an alliance with Russia and Peter agreed, although he had just signed a treaty of peace with Sweden.

The first campaign, like that of Azov, was a failure. The war started late in the year, in August, and the army marched north during the autumn rains when the roads were deep in mud. Men, horses and supplies were lost and the army arrived cold, exhausted and ill-fed. The first battle was fought at Narva in a driving snowstorm, and the Russians were defeated and panic-stricken. The only ones that stood courageously were Peter's own Preobrazhenski regiments.

If, after this defeat, the King of Sweden had decided to invade Russia, he might have won the war; but he was a young man, as strong-willed as Peter but less well balanced, as courageous, but wilful and obstinate. He chose instead to invade Poland where, as Peter said, he "got stuck in the Polish bog" and left the Russians alone, as he despised them. The result was that Peter had time to repair his losses in men and artillery, drawing new recruits from all over the country and demanding the very bells out of the church towers to melt down for cannon. Then he turned his replenished forces against the territory he longed for,

the Baltic coast, which was defended only by Swedish garrisons.

The first territory he regained was the northern end of the ancient river route on which Russia was founded. At the source of the Neva, where it runs out of Lake Ladoga, there was a little island shaped like a nut and called the Nut; this Peter took and renamed Schlüsselburg, or the Key Fortress, because it commanded the entrance of the river. Then he went down the river — remembering the days when it had been filled with ships going to and from Novgorod, remembering the victory of Alexander Nevsky over the Swedes nearly five hundred years before — and took a small Swedish fort at its mouth.

Then he astounded and dismayed his countrymen again, for here — on a few marshy islands hundreds of miles from any city or farmland, here on open water which was unknown to most of his people — he decided to build not only a city but a new capital for Russia! The war with Sweden was not by any means over; but in 1703, on one of these desolate islands, Peter cut two sods, laid one on the other in the form of a cross and ordered a fortress and a cathedral to be built there. Then he summoned soldiers, peasants, Cossacks and Tartars from all over Russia and set them to building a city. There was no place for them to live, there was not enough food, there were no tools, there was nothing to carry away earth in except men's arms or their shirts. Thousands died of exposure and illness; it is said that the ill preferred to die rather than to recover and continue the work. But men were little more to Peter than the trees with which he built his ships. More men were sent for; houses were built, grain was shipped, piles were driven deep into the marshy soil and the new city rose over the graves of countless workmen. Peter called it his paradise and named it St. Petersburg, after his patron saint.

Meanwhile the King of Sweden had defeated Poland; he had at the very first put Denmark out of the war, so that Peter's allies were of little use to him. Just as the king was about to turn from Poland and invade Russia, rebellions broke out on the

Volga, in Astrakhan and among the Cossacks of the Don. Thousands of peasants had fled to the Cossacks to escape military service, forced labor and increased taxes; and Peter had ordered the Cossacks to send back the fugitives. This the Cossacks had never done; they rebelled instead and the future looked dark.

The rebellions were put down, however, by his generals, and the Swedish king made another mistake. When he came out of Poland, instead of marching against Moscow, he turned south to join a Cossack headman who had gone over to him. He got too far away from his source of supplies, the Russians cut off his reinforcements, and his own fine army, ill-clad and ill-fed, was weakened by a winter's cold on the bare steppe. Peter caught up with the Swedes at Poltava, on a tributary of the Dnieper. In spite of the courage of their army and their King, they were completely defeated and the King fled into Turkey. This was in July, 1709.

The battle of Poltava is one of Russia's great victories. One by one its dangerous enemies were crossed out: the Teutonic Knights on Lake Peipus, the Mongols at Kulikovo and in the bloodless victory of 1480; Lithuania was absorbed into Poland and Poland became a weak ally after 1667. At Poltava Sweden ceased to be an enemy. The little Russian state, starting from the nucleus of Moscow, survived them all and grew, from century to century, in territory, population and power. Only one dangerous enemy was left now — Turkey; and Turkey had never attacked Russia; it had only supported the Tartars of the Crimea and blocked the mouths of all the southern rivers.

The war with Sweden embroiled him with this last enemy. The Swedish king, an extraordinary young man, made trouble even as a fugitive in Turkey, for he persuaded the Sultan to join the war against Russia. Peter welcomed this, for he had longed to come to grips with Turkey and win through to the Black Sea. But this time *he* made a mistake. Leading his European army of forty thousand men too far from home, he met an army of two hundred thousand Turks on the river Pruth, which

runs into the Danube. An old-fashioned army, accustomed to fighting Tartars, might have done better. The Russians fought bravely but they were outnumbered and surrounded and had to ask for peace. The Turks presented a treaty and Peter trembled for all his conquests; for the Turks, as allies of the Swedes, might demand them all. But all the Sultan wanted was Azov; that city, so proudly won, had to be given up and the fortifications, built at the cost of thousands of Russian lives, must be leveled to the ground.

This was bitter to Peter, but he consoled himself with further conquests in the north. The Swedish war dragged on for another ten years and during that time he conquered the Baltic coast from Riga to Vyborg. If he could not sail on the Black Sea he certainly would on the Baltic. He built a fleet at St. Petersburg that met and defeated a small Swedish squadron. Peter, as a rear admiral, had the joy of taking part in the fight. "Who would have thought," he wrote to his friends, "twenty years ago, that we should have won a naval battle on the Baltic in ships built with our own hands?" These victories made his "paradise," St. Petersburg, safe.

During those ten years important things happened in his personal life. He found a wife to suit him. She was a plump, pretty girl named Catherine, who had been taken prisoner by the Russians in Livonia and was a servant in the officers' quarters when Peter met her and fell in love with her. She went with him on the bitter campaign on the Pruth River, where she had to cut off her beautiful hair because of the heat and where, after the defeat, she gathered enough money and jewels from the army to bribe the Turkish general to grant Peter a favorable peace. He never forgot her faithfulness at that time; he married her, first secretly and then publicly, and finally had her crowned Tsaritsa, with the usual magnificent ceremony. She gave him companionship and comfort; when the nervous twitching of his face and body or a fit of anger came upon him, his friends sent hastily for

Catherine, who took him aside, laid his head on her lap and stroked it with her strong hands until he fell into a refreshing sleep. She was sensible and warm-hearted and had enough character to stand up to him. Once she was pleading with him for the life of a favorite of hers; Peter grew angry and smashed with his strong fist a Venetian mirror that hung on the wall. "So," he said, scowling at her with sinister meaning, "I can break the fairest ornament of my palace." "Well," answered Catherine, "and is your palace any the more beautiful when you have done so?" She bore him many children but only two daughters lived to grow up.

This was a great grief to them both, for Peter, like Ivan before him, had destroyed his eldest son, the heir to the throne.

Alexei, the son of Peter's first wife, was a quiet, studious young man with no great gifts of mind or character. He had been taken from his mother when he was a child and was never in sympathy with his father, who terrified him. He was brought up by women and priests and disapproved of all the changes that his father was making. Peter took him, when he was only a boy, on his campaigns and Alexei hated war; he thought of entering a monastery. Peter, who forced everyone to do his will, was baffled by this son who would succeed him as Tsar and who, he feared, would undo all his work. He feared, too, that while he was away, as he so often was, the discontented nobles — and there were plenty of them — might rebel against him and put Alexei on the throne.

The crisis between them came in 1716. Peter wrote several letters to his son and finally asked him to make a decision. "Do you help me in my sorrows and trouble," he wrote, "so hard to be borne? No, not in the least. You hate my deeds, which I do for the people of this nation, not sparing my health, and after my death you will destroy them. To stay as you would like to be, neither fish nor flesh, is impossible. Therefore either change your character and be my worthy successor or become a monk. Give me immediately an answer or I shall have to treat you as a

criminal." Alexei, alas, could not change his character. He did not want to be Tsar but neither did he want to become a monk, for he had recently fallen in love. Faced with a decision, he fled to Austria, where he remained hidden for a year. Then Peter's spies found him. Peter promised to forgive him if he would return, give up his right to the throne, and tell the names of all those who had helped him and sympathized with him.

Alexei returned and did all that his father demanded. A new reign of terror began, like the execution of the Streltsy. Nobles, bishops, princes, officials, men and women were tortured and exiled or executed in the usual horrible ways. During this time new accusations were brought against Alexei. He was imprisoned and, in spite of his father's promise of forgiveness, he died under the knout. This happened on July 8th, 1718. The next day was the anniversary of Poltava and it was celebrated with all the usual extravagant gaiety.

Three years later, in 1721, the Swedish war was over. All of Peter's conquests in the north were granted to him in the peace treaty. Russia now held a broad stretch of the Baltic coast; it was no longer a distant, unknown, half-barbarous country, but a respected member of the turbulent family of European nations, with a powerful army, a well-tried young navy; it was something to be reckoned with. It had not held such a place in Europe since the days of Yaroslav.

The peace was celebrated in St. Petersburg. The government had already been moved there; the noble families of Moscow, as well as merchants and artisans, had been ordered to leave their homes and to build themselves houses in the new capital. They obeyed with suppressed groans, for St. Petersburg was a paradise only to Peter. It was foggy, unhealthy and farther north than Novgorod; its streets were often flooded, as the land was very low, and it was hundreds of miles from anywhere. But the celebrations were gay: there were masquerades, balls, feasts and fireworks; Peter led the processions through the streets, beating

the drum, which he did very well, and was as merry as any boy. In the solemn thanksgiving in the cathedral he was given, by the Senate and the Holy Synod, the titles of Emperor, Father of his Country, and the Great. "For," said his chief minister, "only through Your Majesty's tireless labor and direction have we been brought from the darkness of ignorance and set upon a glorious stage before the world; we have been led from non-existence to existence and added to the company of nations."

Peter was then nearly fifty years old. He had not given all his time to war or to bringing Russia into the orbit of Europe. He was great in many ways. Although he exhausted the country and drove his people to rebellion by the taxes and the labor that he required, he wanted them to be happier and more prosperous, as European people were. He had won for them an outlet for trade; he also wanted them to produce things that they could sell abroad and so bring money into the country. For countries earn their livings just as people do, and if they want to be prosperous, they must earn more than they spend.

So far, Russia sold almost nothing but raw materials: flax, hemp, timber, wax, tar, tallow, furs and hides were its principal exports. People do not pay as much for raw materials as they do for manufactured things: they pay more for cloth than they do for wool, more for rope than for hemp; more for linen than for flax, more for a fur coat than for skins. Russia had almost no manufactures, Russian leather being the only product that was valued abroad. Foreign merchants took its materials, manufactured them and sold them for their own profit.

So Peter started factories and encouraged them in every way. He brought in foreigners to teach Russian workmen and sent Russians abroad to learn; he lent money to men who were willing to run factories and gave them whole villages of serfs to work for them. He planned and started the building of canals to join the principal rivers. He encouraged mining and especially iron foundry, so that Russia could forge its own weapons. "Truly our state of Russia," he said, "abounds over many another land,

so blessed is it with minerals that can be useful to us." He started textile factories, so that the soldiers could be clothed with Russian cloth, and the ships have Russian sails; he built glass and paper factories, and he fumed with rage because the work was so slow. "However necessary and good the work may be," he said, "our people will not do any new thing unless they are forced to it."

He did the same thing in education. He knew that the leaders of the country, at least, must be educated; so he established schools and ordered all the sons of the gentry and nobility to attend them. The attendance was so poor that a law was made forbidding a man to marry until he could show that he had studied arithmetic, geometry, reading, writing, and fortification. He simplified the old Slavonic alphabet; he started a newspaper and encouraged printing and the translation of foreign books. He established a naval school and a school of engineering, manning them with foreign teachers.

He made changes in the government but they were mostly changes of names just as he had changed the title of Tsar to that of Emperor. He let the old Council of Boyars die out and replaced it with a Senate of ten members who ruled in his absence, since he was away from his capital more often than he was in it. The old departments of government he called Colleges of Ministers and added a College of the Admiralty and one of Mines and Manufactures. He divided the empire into ten provinces and placed governors over them, but these men did not rule them any better than the old military governors had done. All the important positions he gave to his own trusted friends and followers, who were very much like the *druzhina* of one of the old Grand Princes. Some, like the Golitsyns and the Apraksins, were descendants of Rurik; some, like Menshikov, came from nowhere; one of his admirals began his life as a Portuguese cabin boy. It was a fine day for men of ability if they could stand the pace Peter set for them; if they could be carried home drunk at midnight and get up at sunrise to cut down a grove of trees, led by their indefatigable master.

He made a real change in the Church. When the Patriarch died, Peter did not appoint another; to manage the affairs of the Church he created a sort of committee of the high clergy, called the Holy Synod, and its chairman was not a member of the clergy but a government official appointed by the Emperor. After that the Church was a department of the government; the days were gone by when a Patriarch might rebuke a Tsar and call him back to a realization of his duty.

In the lives of the people, the great majority of the peasants, he made no changes except for the worse. They were still only tools, only a forest of trees to be cut down and used, only the source of an ever-widening river of taxes. In order to get more money for his wars and his building, Peter changed the tax on households to a poll tax, that is, a tax on all male individuals, excepting the gentry, nobility and clergy. This arrangement nearly doubled the taxes paid by the peasants. They ate rye bread and cabbage, sometimes they ate bark and weeds, while they took their pigs and chickens and their eggs to the markets and sold them for money to pay their taxes. Their lives were grievous, their complaints were endless and useless. Either no attention was paid to them, or if, as once happened, a peasant had the courage to draw up a petition asking to be freed "from work that is too great for our strength" his owner ordered him to be beaten with the knout "so mercilessly as to leave no breath in his body."

Yet Peter desired nothing but the good of his country and never spared himself, as he never spared others. He forgot that other men were not so great as he was in body, in mind, in energy and in purpose. He tried to accomplish in twenty-five years what actually took a couple of centuries. His mighty figure strode from Archangel to Azov, from St. Petersburg to Astrakhan, into Europe and back, never resting, trying to pull with his own powerful hands an ignorant, over-burdened people, an obstinate, backward nobility, a prejudiced clergy into the ways he believed they must go. He was like one of the ancient heroes

of the bylinas, like Ilya of Murom, more than life size. For he truly plucked up an oak forest and with it swept away a band of Tartars; he traced a line on the earth with his finger and canals were cut to join the great rivers and to link St. Petersburg to Astrakhan; he crossed two sods and a European city rose out of a wilderness.

He died in 1725, when he was only fifty-two years old. He left Russia a powerful European state, with a trained army of more than two hundred thousand men and with a navy of forty-eight warships and eight hundred smaller vessels, a navy that had already defeated the sea-going Swedes and Turks; he left more than two hundred factories. He left Russia in possession of the much-disputed eastern coast of the Baltic Sea, with a new capital built on European waters, and he left it aroused and awakened, facing western Europe which, at that time, was the most enlightened part of the world.

Russia had so far been profoundly influenced from the north, from the south and from the east; now a new influence, perhaps the strongest of all, was to come from the West, through the broad gateway that Peter had thrust open.



CHAPTER XIII

CATHERINE THE GREAT

Peter's Successors

THIS WESTERN INFLUENCE that Peter had admitted was different from the others that had so deeply affected Russia — the Varangian, the Byzantine and the Tartar influences.

These had entered into every part of the country and had affected everyone, from the poorest peasant to the most powerful lord. Rurik and his descendants, the adventurous and quarrelsome merchant princes, had come to live in Rus and gave it its government; the Byzantine priests had brought their religion into the remotest villages as well as the largest cities; the Tartars, after passing over the land like a hurricane, leveling palaces and hovels, had dominated everyone in it for centuries through their warriors and tax collectors.

Western Europeans came into Russia, too, but they were very few. Peter opened the door, not so much to men as to ideas, purposes, arts and ways of living — invisible things that come, not

on marching feet, but in the written and the spoken word, from one man's mind to another's. They came slowly, therefore, because few of the people were educated enough to receive them, and they came first to the nobility and the gentry, the people who could read and travel and who had time to think about something besides their daily bread. Therefore this Western influence divided the people and increased the distance that already separated the upper classes — that is, the Tsar, the clergy, the nobility and the gentry — from the lower classes, the traders, the workmen and the peasants.

The very safety which Peter's army gave to the country was a dividing factor. For the centuries of danger had bound the different classes together, each having its part to play in the defense and the building up of the nation.

The new army also made a difference. Up to this time, the army was made up of the nobility and the gentry with their followers, who assembled when there was a war and went home when it was over. Only the Streltsy were professional soldiers. Peter created a European army — a body of trained, professional fighters who served for twenty-five years and were always on duty. Most of them, of course, were peasants, because the peasants made up about nine tenths of the population. Since land was given in return for military service, the land should have been given to the peasants; but, on the contrary, it was given outright to the gentry by Peter. He also had a census taken of the whole population, on which he based his poll tax: this fixed the peasant to the land and to the landowner even more unchangeably than the registers of Alexei had done. It seemed as if, in pulling with his gigantic strength one part of his people into new ways, he had braced his feet against the other part and pushed them lower down.

But at least he had made everyone work: from the lowest vagabond to the highest noble, everyone must serve the state in some way, for Peter could not stand an idler, when there was so much to do.

His successors were very different people, who lacked his energy and his purpose; they themselves were idlers and liked to have idlers about them. During the eighteenth century the nobles and the gentry gained many privileges: they were exempt from bodily punishment, which was a great relief to them, and finally they were freed from any service to the state, either civil or military, unless they chose to give it. The new standing army had taken their places. This was a crying injustice. The only thing that had consoled the serfs for their slavery was the fact that their owners served the state. Now they must pay the taxes, serve in the army, and also support a master who might live in complete idleness in Moscow or St. Petersburg or on his own estate.

The nobles were favored in this way because the successors of Peter needed the support of the upper classes if they were to stay on the throne, to which some of them had only a shadowy right.

Peter had put his eldest son to death, and his sons by Catherine had died when they were little. Therefore a motley collection of people sat on the throne from 1725 to 1762. Peter's wife Catherine succeeded him, the first Empress of Russia. Menshikov ruled for her, but she lived only two years as Empress and Menshikov paid the price of ambition by spending his last years in a Siberian hut, cutting wood to keep himself warm. After Catherine, Peter II, the son of Alexei, ruled for two years, but died of smallpox at fourteen; then Anne, a niece of Peter's, a slovenly, stupid woman, let her German advisers rule for her for ten years. After she died, they continued to rule in the name of her great-nephew, the baby Ivan VI, until he and they were swept aside by Peter's daughter Elizabeth, who was Empress for twenty years.

All of these strange rulers depended on the nobles and on the regiments of the Palace Guards who had replaced the Streltsy. Therefore they won the favor of the nobles by gifts of land and privilege, and the favor of the Guards by gifts of money and

vodka. Thousands of acres of state land were given away with thousands of serfs and no one cared how the latter suffered so long as they served their new masters well.

None of these five successors of Peter was a worthy follower of his, although his daughter was the best of them. The only one of his plans which they carried out was the introduction of European manners and morals, which were not of the best, and the building of his paradise into a splendid European city. A handsome reddish granite had been found in Finland, from which strong quays were built to hold back the floods of the Neva when the ice broke in the spring. Palaces and gardens were made like those of the French king at Versailles. The city was laid out on a large scale, with the wide streets and enormous squares that the Russians love. It was not a Russian city, however; the solid stone houses were European, high-ceilinged and draughty, unlike the compact, low-vaulted, warm buildings of Moscow that suited a cold climate; the public buildings had the pillars and porticoes that originated in the warm Mediterranean lands and they were decorated with sculpture, which the Russians had never seen before. There had been no sculpture in Kievan or Muscovite Russia, partly because stone was so scarce but mostly because the Church had not allowed it: the early priests had taken seriously the commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."

Peter's daughter Elizabeth founded a university in Moscow and built the first Russian theater; schools were started in which French and German were taught to the children of the wealthy. In the cities some families used French entirely among themselves, speaking Russian only with their servants; the Russian language was despised, in spite of its richness and beauty, because so far no great literature had been written in it. Everything European was in fashion and European books were read, there being no Russian books even if people had wanted to read them, except old chronicles and lives of the saints. Plays, novels and poetry were a great delight and novelty and there were

serious books for the more thoughtful. For this was the eighteenth century, a vigorous era that brought many new ideas to birth.

In America the English idea of representative government was creating a new nation; in France the revolution of 1789 was brewing, whose watchword of "liberty, equality and fraternity" was to create a new society in Europe. The writings of Locke and Rousseau and Voltaire were read in Russia, as well as more entertaining things, and their words, like seeds borne on the wind, came in and took root there.

It was into this Russia, profoundly divided in itself, that the true successor of Peter came when she was fourteen years old. She was a little German princess who had been summoned to St. Petersburg to marry Peter's grandson.

An Imperial Marriage

ONE MORNING in January, 1744, four big carriages of the kind known as berlines lumbered into Riga. In the first sat the Princess of Anhalt-Zerbst, a little German state, and her daughter Sophie, who would be fifteen in May. Their small baggage, maids, cook and lackeys followed in the other carriages. Both ladies were blue with cold, though they were wrapped in woolen shawls and mantles; and Sophie's feet were painfully swollen and numb. They had been traveling nearly four weeks over frozen roads from the little city of Stettin in Germany, on their way to St. Petersburg, putting up at miserable inns or in peasants' houses. At Riga they entered another world. The Empress of Russia had sent her chamberlain and a guard of honor to meet them and to deliver her letters of welcome. The vice-governor of the province also came to escort them across the river and the big guns on the fortress fired a salvo in their honor.

In some ways Russia was far more comfortable than the rest of Europe. Its houses, from the peasant's cabin to the richest noble's, were warmed in winter by big stoves that heated not only

the rooms but the corridors and stairways as well. And the Russians knew how to travel in winter, for that was the time when the whole country was wide open to its people; it was like a great floor of snow over which the heaviest weights glided easily on the runners of sleighs and sledges.

The Princess of Zerbst and her daughter were escorted to a long, closed sleigh, scarlet trimmed with silver, drawn by six horses; the Great Peter himself had designed it. It was lined with fur; on the bottom was a satin-covered feather mattress and many cushions. The ladies were wrapped in mantles of gold brocade lined with sable. The young girl, whose cheeks were pink again, had a fit of laughter as the chamberlain explained that they must lie down quite flat in the sleigh. "Stick your legs out," he said as he covered them over with soft fur rugs. They sighed with comfort as whips cracked, voices shouted, and the horses started at a gallop, their harness bells ringing, and carried them smoothly over the snow. A long train of sleighs followed them.

As they left the German-looking Baltic provinces, Sophie looked with eager interest at the flat, forested land and watched for the first glimpse of the city. She knew why she was coming to Russia. The Empress Elizabeth was not married and had adopted her nephew Peter as her heir; she had once been engaged to Sophie's uncle, who had died before they could marry; therefore she felt kindly toward his niece and planned to marry her to the Grand Duke Peter. It was as a future empress that Sophie looked out at the Russian land.

They stopped at St. Petersburg only long enough to rest and to get some suitable clothes for Sophie, for she had come away with only three dresses, a dozen chemises and as many stockings and handkerchiefs. She was delighted by the magnificent palace and the sparkling, ice-bound city. The Neva froze so solid that the troops drilled on the ice; open-air markets were held on the river where frozen foods were sold that had been brought from hundreds of miles around: whole carcasses of beef, of sheep, pigs, poultry and fish. Artificial hills were built of blocks of ice and

planks, over which water was poured, and the young people, in bright-colored fur-lined jackets, fur caps and high boots, coasted down them with much laughter and fun.

But the Empress was in Moscow; they must hurry to reach the old city in time for the Grand Duke's birthday on February 21st. The sleighs traveled night and day, changing horses often at the comfortable relay stations that Peter had established. The ladies slept cozily on their featherbeds; they were wakened in the dark to find great bonfires flaring and a hot breakfast awaiting them; then they drove on, through the short, dazzling days and the long, long nights. They made the journey from Riga to Moscow, via St. Petersburg, in less than two weeks, while the shorter journey, from Stettin to Riga, had taken nearly four weeks.

In Moscow the Empress received them graciously and the Grand Duke was as amiable as he knew how to be. Sophie wrote later in her journal, "I resolved to please my husband, the Empress and the nation and to do everything in my power to succeed in this resolve." It was not easy to please the Grand Duke, for he was a sickly, stupid and malicious young man whom no one liked, nor was it easy to please the capricious, all-powerful Empress; but Sophie pleased the nation because she loved it at once and passionately.

The first thing she did was to study the Russian language and the Orthodox faith; in a few months she was able to answer in Russian the questions addressed to her during the ceremony of her confirmation and christening. At that time she was given the name of Catherine, for Sophie was a name that was hateful to the Empress, who was the Great Peter's daughter. During the spring she traveled with the Empress and her fiancé and saw more of the vast land. She saw the devotion of the crowds who prostrated themselves before their ruler, the processions of priests, in their rich vestments, carrying their banners and crosses, who came out from the cities to meet the Empress and escorted her into the dim, splendid churches; the candlelight gleaming on jeweled icons,

the incense smoke and the splendid singing delighted her senses. Her engagement was nearly broken at one time. "The matter was indifferent to me," she wrote later, "but the Crown of Russia was not. In my inmost soul I never doubted that, sooner or later, I should become the sovereign of Russia in my own right."

A year and a half later she was married with great splendor to Peter; but it was a long, long time before her dream came true.

For eighteen years Catherine had to play the part of Grand Duchess, with a husband whom she despised, in a court that bored her nearly to death. "For eighteen years," she wrote, "I led a life from which ten others would have gone insane and twenty in my place would have died of melancholy." She read a great deal, rode horseback and hunted, in men's clothes, and danced. She was very attractive: she had fine eyes whose lashes drooped at the outer corners, a straight nose, a pretty, firm mouth and a very decided chin. She was short, but bore herself so well and held her head so high that people thought her tall. She was gay of nature and full of life.

In 1762 Empress Elizabeth died and Catherine's husband became Emperor Peter III. No one liked or respected him; he, like Catherine, had grown up in a little German state but, unlike her, he disliked Russia and longed for his first home. When he became Emperor, he put a German commander at the head of the Russian army and immediately started a war against Denmark, for the sake of his German friends. He could have done nothing that would have made him more unpopular.

During her eighteen years of boredom Catherine had showed her character and her ability; she had everything that the Emperor lacked. She had long ago substituted other men for her worthless husband; her lover at this time was a very tall, handsome and reckless captain of the Guards called Gregory Orlov. Orlov had four brothers as dashing as himself, all in the army; they formed a sort of bodyguard for Catherine, and behind them were the powerful regiments of the Guards.

Early one morning in July, 1762, one of the Orlovs came quietly

to Catherine's summer palace at Peterhof and wakened her. "Little Mother," he said, "the time has come." She was ready enough. They drove into St. Petersburg and Catherine easily won the allegiance of the regiments there, who had no desire at all to go off on Peter's wars. She borrowed a uniform and rode out at the head of her troops to confront her husband at Peterhof. But Peter did not wait for her. He had discovered her absence, guessed what she was up to, and had fled in his yacht to the fortified island of Kronstadt in the harbor. But the news had flown faster. He was challenged by the commanding officer of the fortress, "Who goes there?" "The Emperor!" "There is no emperor," was the answer, "there is only the Empress, Catherine the Second!" Nearly fainting with fear, Peter returned and was soon arrested.

He was imprisoned on one of his many country estates; among his guards was one of the Orlov brothers. From this man, a few days later, Catherine received a letter: "Little Mother, merciful Empress! How shall I explain or describe what has happened? . . . There was a quarrel at table between the Emperor and Prince Feodor. . . . We could not separate them and already he was no more! We cannot ourselves remember what we have done. . . ." Catherine announced publicly that Peter had died of colic, and the Orlovs remained in her favor.

Catherine the Great

AT LAST she was sovereign, in her own right, of the country that had captured her imagination when she was a girl and which she loved deeply. At last Peter the Great had a successor, for she admired him immensely and meant to follow in his footsteps. She was thirty-three years old; her many gifts and her great ability had been imprisoned within her all her life; now she would give them free rein.

Although she tried to make herself Russian, Catherine was a German and she understood perfectly what was going on in

western Europe at this time. Europe, the largest peninsula of the great Eurasian continent, was filled with extremely energetic and enterprising nations whose ideas and conquests were fast dominating the whole world. The sea-going nations — France, Spain, Holland and England — had conquered vast territories in America and Asia; the others jostled and elbowed each other within the narrow confines of Europe and could only increase their territory by taking it from one another. They did this constantly, either by open warfare or by political intrigue. They played a dangerous game known as the Balance of Power. Each country tried to get as much for itself as it could with as little danger and loss to itself as possible; none was allowed to become so powerful that it might conquer or dominate the rest. If any country seemed to be growing dangerously strong, the others joined forces against it and so kept it in its place. There were constantly shifting alliances, therefore, whose members changed sides as their interests changed.

Catherine knew all about this game; she had heard about it in her childhood and had watched it ever since she had been in Russia. She reveled in it, for she played it very well indeed; it was an exciting game and the stakes were high. She knew it from the European side because she was German and she knew it from the Russian side because she had studied Russian history and knew the needs and purposes of her adopted country. Like Peter the Great, she wanted Russian ships to sail on the Black Sea; like Ivan the Great, she wanted to regain the lost territory of Rus. Building on the foundations they had laid, she got both these things.

A weak nation had very little chance in Europe if it lay between powerful neighbors. Poland had been weak ever since it was torn by civil war during Tsar Alexei's reign. Its government also could not cope with the increasing danger of its position. In Russia, as in the other strong nations of Europe, the king or emperor had taken the power out of the hands of the nobles and

so unified and strengthened the country; England had gone further ahead, for its middle-class people had taken the power from both king and nobles and the country was ruled by a representative body, the Parliament. But in Poland the nobles still held the power; they elected the king, who was usually a foreign prince, and they often gave the throne to whoever offered the most money for it. The nobles ruled the country through an assembly called the Diet, and so great was their power that any one of them could veto any law or any decision that had been passed by all the others. The result was constant quarreling, inaction and weakness.

West of Poland lay the empire of Austria and the kingdom of Prussia which, under Frederick the Great, was becoming a strong military state. Frederick's family had inherited some of the lands of the Teutonic Knights of evil memory, but this land was on the other side of Poland; Frederick of course longed to unite it to his own kingdom.

East of Poland was Russia, once its enemy, then its ally, now grown so powerful that Poland was of little value to it as an ally. Catherine took advantage of Poland's weakness to interfere in its affairs; she put one of her former lovers on its throne and sent Russian troops in to defend him. She would have liked to keep Poland weak and entirely dependent on Russia; but that was not what Frederick the Great wanted and she must reckon with him. He brazenly suggested that they divide Poland between them, giving a share to Austria for the sake of the Balance of Power.

And that is what was done. A nation that had always been independent, that had been a proud, cultured, though ill-governed, kingdom for centuries, was divided between three other nations who took what they wanted of its land, its cities and its people. It was not done all at once, but at three different times, in the course of twenty years. The first time, Frederick took what he wanted for Prussia; Catherine took the land east of the Dvina and Dnieper rivers, including the old Russian cities of Vitebsk and Polotsk; while Austria took Galicia. The second time, in

1793, Catherine took all of White Russia, Volhynia and western Ukraine down to the Dniester River. The Dnieper ran once again through Russian land and it seemed that Russia was only regaining what had once been its own and had been lost during the Tartar invasion. But the third time, in 1795, Catherine took the Baltic coast as far south as Memel and almost all the territory that had once been Lithuania, while Prussia and Austria divided the rest. The Poles put up a brave fight this last time, but they were no match for three strong enemies and Poland disappeared from the map of Europe.

Catherine's interference in Poland involved her in trouble with Turkey, for Poland bordered Turkey on the south. Catherine was ready for this, too, for her ambition led her to the south as well as to the west. She did not make the mistake of appointing German generals; the army had now learned European methods and provided its own leaders. Turkey, like the other enemies of Russia, was growing weaker as Russia grew stronger. In two wars Catherine's great generals, Suvorov and Potemkin, took Azov and the northern shore of the Black Sea from the Sea of Azov to the mouth of the Dniester. Then they conquered the Crimean Peninsula, that stronghold from which the Tartar hordes had ravaged southern Russia for three hundred years. Catherine rebuilt Peter's navy and sent it around Europe, through the Mediterranean and into the Aegean Sea where it destroyed the Turkish fleet.

Turkey asked for peace and in the final treaty the Sultan agreed that Russian merchant ships should sail through the Black Sea, the straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. It was many long centuries since anything but Cossack boats had ventured even on the Black Sea.

These were mighty victories. For the first time in its history the southern boundary of Russia was safe and fixed: it was no longer a wavering and perilous frontier but, part of it at least, had a firm seacoast and only a defeated enemy beyond. There was no dangerous enemy on any border and the rich, wide steppe was

safe to live on. There was no longer any need for Cossacks: the camp below the rapids was destroyed; some of its romantic horsemen, unable to bear the loss of their republic, went into Turkey, while the rest became a part of the regular Russian army. They kept a large part of their freedom and all of their pride. They were governed by their own headmen and, when not at war, were farmers and shepherds on their beloved steppe.

Catherine enjoyed being Empress. In 1787 she visited Crimea, the first monarch to make that journey since the early days of Rus. Her trip was a triumphal progress, arranged by Potemkin, who was one of her favorites. He was a curious, moody man — an able general who trembled at gunfire, a lover of luxury and theatrical display.

She left St. Petersburg in midwinter and her trip must have recalled her first journey into Russia. Her sleigh outshone the one designed by Peter the Great, for it was drawn by thirty horses; it was large enough to serve as a sitting room for eight people and was furnished with bookcases and card tables. The horses were changed at relay stations where huge bonfires kept off the biting cold. Catherine took with her a suite of courtiers and ladies and invited several foreign ambassadors to accompany her; to each one she gave a cloak, cap and muff of sable. For three weeks they sped over the snowy land to Kiev; every town and home that received them was furbished and decorated for the great occasion.

They spent three months in Kiev, where Catherine received the officials and gentry of Ukraine. When the ice broke on the Dnieper they embarked in eighty barges whose handsome cabins were hung with silk and furnished with every luxury; there was a band of musicians on every boat. This great flotilla moved majestically down the Dnieper and Catherine knew her history well enough to realize the full meaning of her journey. Along the shores she and her guests saw, instead of the empty steppes and forests that they expected, flocks and herds in abundance, and crowds of young men and women, handsomely dressed

in peasant costumes, came to the river's edge and sang and danced for her. This was delightful but not a true picture of her country or its people. The guests began to notice a strange resemblance between the young dancers in one place and those they had seen in another. Potemkin, the showman, had taken, so they say, the young people from a thousand villages, dressed them up and had them appear along the route to entertain his imperial mistress; at night they dashed ahead and appeared at a new place on the following day. It is also said that they were left to go home, hundreds of miles away, as best they could.

The party disembarked just above the cataracts, as the heavy barges could not have braved safely those foaming rapids. Handsome carriages and the usual relays of horses awaited them and they drove over the flat, empty steppe. Catherine entertained her guests with pleasant conversation and games, while Potemkin, when the landscape grew monotonous, had bands of Cossacks display their horsemanship, their attack, their swift flight, before her. On the way, the King of Poland and the Emperor of Austria joined her, for she wanted all Europe to know of her triumph.

When she came to Crimea she was met with extravagant festivities by Potemkin. She passed under arches on which was written, "This way to Byzantium" and her imagination was fired, even as Oleg's and Igor's had been, with the desire to go farther and to possess the glorious city, Tsargrad, that held the gateway of the seas. She dreamed of a Greek empire free of the Turks, ruled by her second grandson to whom she had given the significant name of Constantine. She traveled through Crimea, most of which is steppe, down to its beautiful southern shore, which a range of wooded hills, running steeply into the sea, protects from the northern winds and makes a delightful pleasure resort. There she stayed in the palace of the former Khans of Crimea; she visited the fine new harbor of Sevastopol and reviewed the Black Sea fleet that Potemkin had built.

She returned by land, by way of Kharkov, Kursk and Moscow, thus making the tour of an important part of her empire, and

arrived in St. Petersburg in July, well pleased with her journey.

Catherine completed the Europeanizing of her court and of St. Petersburg. She herself corresponded at great length with the scholars and philosophers of the West; she used the Russian, French and German languages with equal ease. Peter the Great had introduced his country to the Western nations; Catherine brought Russia directly into the councils, the intrigues and the wars of Europe. Indeed, by destroying Poland, she moved Russia's western border over to Germany and Austria. Its immense weight was ever after to play an important part in the Balance of Power.

She was proud, too, and knew what the court of a powerful European monarch should be: she made it as brilliant as any in Europe and always there was an added touch of Russian extravagance.

She showered wealth and favors on Potemkin, gave him the title of Prince of Tauris (the old Greek name of Crimea) and built him a magnificent palace that is still called the Tauride Palace. In it one spacious, pillared hall opened into another; a part of it, heated in winter by hot-water pipes, was a garden where tropical trees and the loveliest flowers bloomed all the year round. At the end of the Turkish wars he gave a banquet for her there that probably outshone anything ever given by a subject to his queen.

When Catherine, who was then a stout, smiling old lady over sixty, came to the banquet she was greeted first by an enormous crowd in the street to whom food and clothes had been distributed. At the door Potemkin, in a uniform trimmed with diamonds, his orders flashing on his breast, met her and led her to a jeweled throne, while first an orchestra of six hundred instruments and then a choir hailed her as her country's glory. When she was seated a curtain was drawn and a ballet was performed by dancers — among whom were her two grandsons — whose costumes rivalled those of the court. A comedy followed and after that a procession that represented all the nations and

rices of the world. Six hundred guests sat down to a dinner served on gold and silver plate; Potemkin, who was an epicure, had ordered the food from every quarter of the empire. And after the dinner there was a ball.

Through the glitter and the glory of these festivities and those that Potemkin had staged for her in Crimea, Catherine never saw the people whose taxes and whose labor made these things possible. She had started her reign with very liberal ideas, for it was the fashion in Europe to be liberal; she had planned a revision of all the laws and had said that something should be done about serfdom. But early in her reign there had been another terrible rebellion along the Volga, led by a Cossack named Pugachev, and before she died, in 1796, the French Revolution had terrified every monarch in Europe; for the French king had been beheaded by his enraged people and the nobility had been either killed or driven out of the country. It was all very well to be liberal, but this was going much too far. Catherine, who did so much for Russia, did nothing for the majority of its people, but made their lot worse. She gave away hundreds of thousands of serfs to her favorites and made serfs of the peasants of Ukraine who, up to this time, had been free to move about and settle where they chose.

Many people, from the time when serfdom began, believed that it was unwise, but no one knew how to end it. Each ruler made the condition of the people worse. The idea of giving the peasants their freedom seemed very like giving freedom to the horse on which one was riding.

Nine Tenths of the People

A FEW years after Catherine's trip to Crimea, and a year or so before Potemkin's famous ball, a traveler was driving from St. Petersburg to Moscow during the summer. One very hot Sunday, at noon, he saw a peasant patiently plowing furrow after furrow in a field. He got out of his carriage and approached the man.

"God aid you," he said. "And you, sir," answered the peasant, stopping his horse. "Why are you working on Sunday, and in this heat?" "God does not wish a man to die of hunger when he has his strength and is the father of a family," was the answer. "But haven't you enough time during the week to do your work?" "There are six days during the week, sir, and those six days we must work for our master. In the evenings, even, when the weather is fine, we must cart his hay to the barn, and on holidays the women and girls pick berries and mushrooms in the woods. God grant," he added, casting a look at the sky, "that it rain tonight," "Have you a large family?" asked the traveler. "Three sons and three daughters, all under ten years of age." "Can you feed them all, working only on Sundays?" "Not only Sundays; the nights are also ours. I am fortunate, because I have two horses: when this one is tired, I shall use the other that is resting yonder by the tree. So it does not go too badly."

The traveler went on his way, thinking about this conversation, for he was one of the men in whose mind the seeds of Western thought were taking root. Half the population at that time were, like this peasant, privately owned serfs; most of the other half were serfs who lived on state land, usually known as Crown peasants. Forty-five million peasants supported about half a million nobles, gentry and clergy; they provided all the food, most of the soldiers and half the income of the state.

Of these the privately owned serf was the worse off, for he was at the mercy of his master: he might belong to a man who demanded no more than the three days' work a week which custom allowed him, or to a man who demanded six. There were many different sorts of masters and different sorts of servitude, but the peasant had no choice in the matter.

There were, of course, masters who were both just and kind. Near Yaroslavl there was such a man, who lived in a simple house in his village and shared everything he had with the families who worked for him. The result was that when he died he owned three times as many serfs as he had to start with, for

his fame spread about and when any neighboring village or estate was for sale, the peasants came to him and begged him to buy them. "But I am not rich," he would tell them. "I have not enough money to buy you." "Never mind, little father," they answered. "We have some money; we will bring it to you and you can buy us with that."

There was a prince who owned enormous estates in eastern Russia and who took pride in having wealthy peasants who lived in comfort in stone or brick houses and even owned other serfs. They could not buy serfs themselves but did it in their master's name. A traveler stopped at the house of one of these rich peasants, where he was given a delicious supper in a room furnished with fine mahogany and decorated with paintings. "You must be very fond of a master who makes you so prosperous," said the visitor. "Ah, yes," replied the peasant with a sigh, "he is a fine man. But I would give him this house and all my fortune if he would just give me my freedom."

On the other hand there were shiftless, selfish, cruel and even insane masters who had the power of life and death over thousands of human beings. There was one woman who kept a hairdresser shut up for three years in a cage in her dressing room, because she did not want it known that she wore false hair. There was a princess who tortured to death one hundred and thirty-eight of her servants. There was a man who said proudly, "Every year every woman on my estates must have a child, preferably a son. If a daughter is born, a fine must be paid; if the child is born dead, another fine! If a woman has no child during the year, she must present nine yards of linen." And between these extremes there were thousands of ordinary, selfish owners who accepted serfdom as they did the rising of the sun and allowed their peasants to feed them, support them and wait on them.

There was no one to whom a serf could appeal for justice or for mercy. The landowner was the judge of his serfs and could punish them at will: he could flog them to death, exile them to Siberia or to forced labor in the mines, or send them to the army.

He could sell them, like cattle, with or without their families; he could give them away as presents or sell them to a factory owner who made them work for long hours and paid them only enough to cover their small living expenses and their taxes. Finally, they were forbidden, under pain of being sent to forced labor in Siberia, to complain or to present any petition whatever for the improvement of their lot.

The household serf was often worse off than the man who farmed the land, since the former was more directly in his master's power. There were innumerable household serfs, as any landowner could order any number of men and women in his villages to be his servants. Every country and city house had a vast number of servants, each with his own little job to do. A country estate supported itself almost entirely: only luxuries and iron tools, tea, sugar and so forth, were brought from outside. Houses, carriages and furniture were made on the place, linen and woollen cloth were woven there; shoes, harness, household utensils were all made by the peasants, who were able to turn their hands to almost any work and kept this pioneer ability to supply all their needs right up to modern times.

On large estates the owner often wanted an orchestra and a theater, as those European entertainments were very popular. His serfs provided both and were often assigned to their different instruments or roles regardless of their tastes or gifts. "Here, Vashka," the master would say, "you will play the flute; Petrushka, the drum; Mitya, the violin." A visitor wrote one time that he had gone into the depths of the country to a princely estate, where he had been entertained with an opera and a ballet, both of which he praised highly for their beauty and originality. He was surprised to hear from his host that they had been written, produced and acted entirely by his serfs. Yet these talented men and women, when their gifts were not needed, might be sent to sweep the courtyard or polish their master's boots and could be flogged for a poor performance.

Sometimes, again, a master was very proud of his servants'

gifts: a talented boy was often sent abroad to study music or to the city to learn mathematics so that he might keep his master's accounts, or cookery; a woman might be trained to be a dress-maker or a dancer. The story is told that a man went one evening to a concert by a well-known violinist; after it was over he sent to the artist, who was one of his serfs, a piece of paper granting him his freedom. Another young man, coming back from Europe, where his music had been much admired, was not so fortunate, for his master was proud of owning so fine an artist and refused him his freedom, though he could pay highly for it. The young man killed himself.

Not all serfs had to serve their masters or even work directly for them: many paid him instead each year a certain sum of money, called obrok, which they were free to earn in any way they could. Landowners often did not live on their estates; in that case they might turn all their land over to the peasant communes, asking for a yearly obrok in return. Or there might be more men in a village than were needed to work the land and serve the master; therefore certain ones were put on obrok and were free to go to a city and work there as drivers, grooms, cobblers or whatever work they chose, or to join an artel of fishermen or lumbermen or carpenters. If they were clever and thrifty they might live very comfortably; but there was no law limiting the amount of obrok or the amount of work that could be asked: if a village or a man became prosperous the obrok might be indefinitely raised. A serf was never free from the nagging fact of his servitude.

Besides the privately owned serfs, who made up half the population, there were the Crown peasants, who had no masters and who felt as if they owned themselves and the land on which they worked. But they, too, were bound to the land and were serfs of the state: at any moment they might be given to a court favorite, sent to work on roads or canals or the building of a new city or assigned to work in a factory. Whole villages might be sent hundreds of miles away to work that they hated and to a grim

and sordid life, for working conditions were bad everywhere in the early nineteenth century and nowhere worse than in Russia. The working day was twelve or fourteen hours long, the factories were badly heated and lighted, the pay was just enough to cover their taxes and their bare living.

None of these increasing burdens were accepted meekly. Patiently, stubbornly, the peasants complained and sent petitions to government officials and to the Tsar himself who, they believed, was always on their side; but there was little result. Usually they were flogged back into obedience; ringleaders were sent to Siberia, which was sometimes a happy thing, since there was no serfdom in Siberia; but sometimes they were sent to forced labor in the mines, which was the worst kind of slavery. When their petitions were unheeded and their burdens unbearable, they rebelled. Then, if the local police were not strong enough to overcome them, a detachment of the army was sent against them. The Cossacks, who had once been the hope of the oppressed, were used now to keep them in subjection and did their duty with their usual ruthlessness. The peasants, after some had been killed, many punished, their village burned down, had to pay the expenses of the expedition sent against them, which usually ruined them.

It is easy to see that under these circumstances there was little understanding between the owned and the owners, between the governed and the government. In fact, the greatest difference between the upper and lower classes was in their government: for the country was ruled by an autocracy, that is, by the will of one man, the emperor; while nine tenths of the people, the peasants, lived in communities that were run by themselves on purely democratic principles.

Since they had become serfs and could not move from where they lived, almost all the peasants lived in communes. All their affairs were regulated by the mir, the village meeting, under its elected head, the elder. The land that was given to them for their support, by the state or by their owners, was divided among them

at these meetings and the payment of their taxes was arranged according to their ability to pay.

The tax was based on the census which, ever since Peter's time, was taken every twelve or fifteen years. The census might state, for example, that in a certain small village there were thirty "souls," that is, thirty male serfs; therefore that village paid the poll tax for thirty people. Some of those "souls" might be babies, some might be old men too feeble to work; in five or ten years' time some might die or be taken for military service and others might be born: nevertheless, until the next census, the same tax must be paid. It is easy to see what complications and injustices might arise from such a system. If the government had tried to administer it, it would have taken many officials and been done very badly; but the mir arranged it with extraordinary wisdom and justice, giving each family as much land as it could use and a corresponding share of the taxes.

At the end of the eighteenth century the village meeting took place, as it always had, on the one, wide, uneven, treeless street, between the rows of wooden houses joined by plank fences. The peak of the roof and two rows of little windows faced the street, while a gate in the fence opened into the side yard and led to the door of the house.

The whole village came out in response to a summons of the elder, or at the request of any householder; the heads of households, a few women always among them, formed the meeting, while the other women and the children watched from the gateways or talked among themselves. The meetings might seem disorderly to anyone looking on; for they were formed of small groups talking excitedly; in one there might be angry words, in another a burst of laughter; then a firm voice was raised and the rest gathered round to listen, nodding their heads in agreement.

Where was the elder? He was known by the chain of office he wore round his neck; he did not try to keep order but he knew when the debate had gone far enough. He stepped back so as to make himself heard and cried, "Well, ye orthodox, have you

decided that it shall be done?" And from all sides voices answered, "Agreed! Agreed!"

So, according to the ancient custom of unanimous agreement, it was decided: so, since the beginning of history, the people governed themselves with astonishing success. Whenever they were left alone and insofar as they were allowed to do so — in the town *vieche*, in the Cossack camp, in the village *mir*, in the *artel* — they lived in pure democracy.



CHAPTER XIV

ALEXANDER THE BLESSED

The Hopeful Years

THE HOPES OF the people, and especially of the educated few who read and thought, were high and their hearts full of joy when Alexander, Catherine's young grandson, who had danced in Potemkin's ballet, came to the throne in 1801. Catherine had taken charge of him as soon as he was born, had taught him herself when he was a child, and then had him educated by liberal European teachers who filled his mind with knowledge and with the high ideals that were then current in the world. In his grandmother's brilliant court he had become a polished man of the world. Russia had never seen such an emperor: tall, handsome, elegant and courteous, his face radiant with goodness and energy, he charmed his own people as well as foreigners.

The beginning of his reign was darkened by one of those violent tragedies that were all too common in the Romanov family.

Alexander's father, Paul, had succeeded Catherine: a man embittered by his mother's long domination and by their mutual hatred. He was neurotic to the point of insanity; he was unbearably strict about every trifle of etiquette: an officer might be sent to Siberia if, on parade, there was a spot on his glove. He is remembered for having said, "No man at this court is important except the man to whom I am speaking, and he is important only while I am speaking to him." He wanted to undo all that Catherine had done; the courtiers who had basked in the sunshine of her favor now feared for their lives, while those whom she had exiled were recalled. His political ideas were dangerous. He broke with England, which had for long been a good friend and customer of Russia, and sent an expedition of Cossacks to conquer India.

Several of the leading nobles, realizing that they and the country might soon be ruined, spoke to Alexander of the necessity of getting rid of Paul as Tsar, and Alexander, torn between his duty to a father whom he could not love and to his country which he loved greatly, at last consented to having Paul deposed. He must have known that his frantically proud father would never willingly give up his power. One midnight in March, 1801, a group of men broke into Paul's room and murdered him. Alexander was not with them but his conscience was always burdened by the deed.

Inside of a century, in the imperial family, a father had put his son to death, a wife had agreed to the murder of her husband, and a son to that of his father.

Soon after Alexander's coronation, a young man wrote him a long letter, pouring out his soul in hopes and plans for the future. "Alexander, beloved of our hearts!" the letter began. "What a joyful future awaits us!" He wrote of the great extent and wealth of Russia, of its strong and faithful people and then of the new ideas of constitutional government, of the right of all men to be free and happy, that had arisen in the West. "These ideas, Sire, embraced by your beneficent spirit, tested by your

religious ardor, as gold by fire, will be the foundation of the happiness of Russia. . . . In my soul I throw myself at your feet, shedding tears of the purest, everlasting devotion." Alexander was deeply moved, called the young man to him and embraced him. "I thank you," he said. "Always speak frankly to me and tell me the truth."

Alexander immediately recalled the thousands of people whom his father had exiled, and recalled, too, the Cossacks from the deserts and mountains of central Asia, whither the wild-goose chase to India had taken them. He gathered about him young and able men, full of plans for the future. Reform was in the air, in Russia and abroad, and the young Emperor and his friends were well aware of what was happening in Europe and America. They called themselves the "Secret Council"; they met in the palace and discussed every aspect of the national life and every possibility of improvement. It is sad to find how little they accomplished.

They talked about a constitution, about a charter of civil rights, such as England, the United States and France already had, which protected men from unreasonable arrest, promised them public trials by jury, and granted freedom of speech, of religion and of the press, none of which existed in Russia. They talked about abolishing serfdom. But nothing was done, except for a few unimportant changes in the government. Peter's Colleges were changed to ministries, with one responsible man at the head of each; Alexander's friends became his ministers and should therefore have been free to put all their plans into practice. Yet one incident will show how difficult that was.

The Senate (which in Peter's time had replaced the old Council of Boyars) was given the right to protest against any decree of the Emperor's which they thought unnecessary or unjust. They promptly exercised that right and sent a protest to Alexander about some decree of his. He received it coldly, kept it for a long time, and finally replied that the Senate had read the new law incorrectly: they had the right to protest against past

decrees but any new one must be accepted without question.

His wisest councillor, Michael Speransky, drew up a most reasonable plan of constitutional government, founded on the village commune. He proposed that district and provincial assemblies and finally a national assembly be elected, to advise the Tsar and make laws for the country. But he himself said, when he presented his plan, "How can this be done without overthrowing the whole existing order of things?" And that Alexander was not willing to do. He had been brought up by Catherine, who was an autocrat, and by his father, who was autocratic to the point of insanity. Autocracy had made Russia an enormous and powerful empire; who could dare to weaken it? One of Alexander's closest friends said of him, "He would gladly give freedom to everyone, if everyone would freely do exactly what he wanted them to do." He and his friends were sincere in their desire to make their country better and their people happier. The problem seemed just too difficult to solve, for everything, from autocracy at the top to serfdom at the bottom, would have to be changed.

A little was done for education. Peter had founded the first schools; the empresses Elizabeth and Catherine had increased them and founded universities. Alexander established a Ministry of Education, founded four universities, two in the Baltic provinces, one in Kharkov and one in Kazan, and planned a system of education that was only partly carried out, as most of the money in his treasury had to be spent on wars. The schools, anyway, were not for the peasants, but only for one tenth of the population, the gentry and nobility.

Like his grandmother, Alexander felt at ease on the European stage, perhaps more so than in Russia. His mother and both his grandmothers were German, for ever since Peter had burst in upon Europe, the Romanov emperors had married German princesses. Like Catherine, he understood and enjoyed the game of European politics. Early in his reign events in Europe caught

his attention and took him, perhaps to his relief, from the desperate problems of his own people.

Napoleon Bonaparte

IN THE first years of the nineteenth century Napoleon Bonaparte completely upset the Balance of Power. He was doing the one thing that was forbidden in that intricate game: he was trying to conquer and dominate the whole of Europe and he nearly succeeded in doing so.

When the French people had beheaded their King and set up a republic, the governments of the neighboring countries, fearing a revolution among their own people, joined forces and made war on France. But the French people had risen up, filled with all the enthusiasm of new and liberating ideas, and had driven back their enemies from every border. Napoleon Bonaparte was a young Corsican officer at that time. He had such skill in war, such ambition and will-power that he became in a few years not only the head of the French army but of the government as well.

Finding himself at the head of an experienced and victorious army, he dreamed, as many men before and after him have done, of uniting Europe under his command and of dominating the world. By 1805, four years after Alexander's coronation, he had made himself Emperor of France and King of Italy, and he held Belgium, Holland and Switzerland.

Alexander had at first admired Napoleon, but as the conqueror pressed eastward and threatened Russia's immediate neighbors — Prussia, Austria and Turkey — he was alarmed. Napoleon seemed to him a tyrant from whom Europe must be saved. His idealism flamed up again: it seemed easier to liberate Europe than to liberate his own people, as indeed it proved to be. England, Austria and Sweden were fighting against Napoleon; in 1805 Alexander joined them and sent his armies into the west.

He himself was not a soldier and Catherine's great generals were dead; the Russian armies were poorly led and were no match for the French. They were badly defeated at Austerlitz in Austria in December, 1805; the war lingered for another year and a half and ended with another bad defeat of the Russian army at Friedland in East Prussia in June, 1807. Russia's allies were also defeated and Napoleon gained enormously in territory and power.

Alexander changed his mind again about Napoleon, and fell out with his allies, accusing them of leaving him to fight alone. Less than two weeks after the battle of Friedland he met Napoleon at Tilsit, in East Prussia, on a raft moored in the center of the river Niemen, which was then the western boundary of Russia. The two emperors embraced — Napoleon short, stout and pompous; Alexander tall, slender and debonair — and each was charmed by the other. Alexander listened with pleasure while Napoleon suggested that they divide the world between them, first partitioning Turkey and then proceeding to the conquest of India and the Far East.

Napoleon treated Alexander thus graciously, as an equal and not as a defeated enemy, because he needed him. He was willing enough to share the vast, vague empire of the East, so long as he was allowed to do as he pleased in Europe. There was one great obstacle to his domination of Europe, and that was England. Only twenty miles of water separated that proud island from the mainland of Europe; therefore the English cared as much as anyone to keep the Balance of Power and to prevent any nation on the continent from becoming too powerful. They could not send many soldiers to the mainland but they were all-powerful at sea. Two months before Austerlitz they had destroyed the French fleet at Trafalgar. Napoleon was used to uninterrupted success and this infuriated him. He planned at first to invade England but wisely abandoned the plan. He decided instead to destroy his enemy by stopping all trade between England and Europe, for England was an industrial country that needed to

sell its manufactured goods in Europe and to buy food and raw materials there. Its Russian trade was very important, for England bought grain for its people and sailcloth, tar and hemp for its ships from the Baltic ports that Peter and Catherine had won.

So Napoleon blockaded the whole northern coast of Europe against England, forbidding the countries which he had conquered or defeated to receive British ships in their ports and even to receive neutral ships carrying British goods. At Tilsit he persuaded Alexander to close the Baltic ports also, and, to compensate for the loss of trade, suggested that Alexander take Finland, which had belonged to Sweden for nearly seven hundred years. A country or a people meant little to Napoleon: his military genius led him to love "the intoxicating gamble of war," as he called it, and in that gamble he treated the small states of Europe as if they were so many playing cards to be shuffled and dealt about at his pleasure.

Alexander went home after Tilsit to a discontented country. The merchants, landowners and his wiser ministers were horrified at the loss of the English trade: they needed to sell their own goods and they needed many things from England, since Russia had few industries of its own. The nobles despised Napoleon as an upstart; the liberals thought him a traitor to the Revolution, and no one was pleased with the alliance, even though Finland, after two years of war, was added to the Russian Empire. War broke out between Turkey and Russia, and shortly afterward Napoleon demanded that Russia fight with him in a war against Austria. The people groaned as more and more young men were taken from the villages into the army.

After a few years Alexander's own enthusiasm cooled, for there were several points of difference between him and Napoleon, and complaints continued about the English trade. The blockade, instead of ruining England, was nearly ruining Russia. Alexander listened to the advice of his ministers and, in 1810, passed a new tariff law which allowed neutral ships to enter the

Baltic ports. English goods immediately began to pour in and English ships crowded the ports flying neutral flags. At the same time a high duty was laid on certain foreign goods, most of which came from France. Both these laws infuriated Napoleon.

But the chief difficulty between them was that Napoleon, whose success had gone to his head, could not tolerate another power in Europe. By 1810 Austria and Prussia were his vassals, he had put his brothers on most of the thrones of Europe and was master of the whole mainland west of Russia. "He cannot suffer any rivals in the career on which he has entered," one of Alexander's ministers said to him. "Any ally of his must either obey him or become his enemy." "Be convinced, Sire," wrote the helpless King of Prussia to Alexander, "he wants no other power beside his own."

There were two other powers: England, the determined enemy of Napoleon, and Russia, his disobedient ally. He could not reach England, but he believed that if he defeated Russia and forced it to restore the blockade, he could defeat England too, for he had great faith in the blockade.

In the hope of making himself the sole power on earth, he massed on the frontiers of Russia, in the spring of 1812, the largest army that had been seen since Batu's day.

The Patriotic War

SINCE THE Mongol invasion many enemies had broken through the frontiers of Russia: countless hordes of Tartars had washed up to the walls of Moscow and back again; the Poles were garrisoned in the Kremlin in 1613; the Swedes had reached Poltava in 1709. But only the army of Napoleon could compare with that of Batu, for it was half a million strong. It was called the Grand Army.

At dawn on June 24th, 1812, a few Cossacks saw the invading horde file slowly over three bridges that had been laid across the Niemen at Kovno; it took them three days to cross. The

Cossacks, from a distance, watching it wind like a great serpent into their land, followed it to Vilna, the old capital of Lithuania, which had belonged to Russia since Catherine's third partition of Poland.

Although this army nearly equalled Batu's in number, it was equal in no other respect.

The army of the Tartar chieftain, although it was composed of many tribes and peoples, moved as one unit, under the perfect discipline of its leaders. It came from the inside of Asia, whose climate and soil were more violent and harsh than Russia's. It came perfectly supplied with everything it needed: every man was mounted and had several extra horses; its food supply followed in the form of enormous herds of cattle and the whole horde moved with amazing speed and smoothness. They were all, apparently, of one mind: war was their sole occupation and they enjoyed it.

Napoleon's army was only one third French; the rest was made up of Poles, Italians, Spanish, Germans, Dutch, Swiss, Illyrians and Austrians, for Napoleon forced his defeated enemies to fight for him. Discipline was poor, except in a few regiments: from the very beginning men deserted, straggled and pillaged, by the thousands. They came from the temperate climates of western Europe, where the winter is not very cold nor the summer very hot, into the violent climate of Russia. They came from the pleasant villages and cities, the crowded, cultivated lands of Europe into the sparsely settled wilderness of Russia. And, unbelievable as it is, they marched into that wilderness with only enough food for three weeks. This was not due to lack of planning: vast stores had been prepared, but horses died, wagons broke down, the loads were abandoned on the road. Before they reached the Niemen, half the supplies had been lost and Napoleon hurried the army on so fast that it outdistanced what was left. Most of the army was on foot and had already marched hundreds of miles. Finally, there was no heart in this great horde: they did not know or care what they were fighting for; most of

Napoleon's generals advised him bluntly and honestly against the war.

The Russians did not know all this, however; they only knew that nothing had been able to withstand the French army. Their own army was divided: part of it was on the Turkish frontier, where peace had just been made; part of it, about eighty thousand men, was north of Napoleon's route, while about forty thousand were south of it. Napoleon was hurrying his army in order to defeat these two divisions before they could join together. His greatest skill was in fighting big battles: his one hope was to meet and destroy the Russian army as soon as possible. "Are they going to let us take their whole country without a fight?" he asked his generals as they marched farther and farther into Russia, without seeing anyone but a few Cossacks on the horizon. "Where will they make a stand?"

But the Russians, besides the fact that they were outnumbered three to one, did not intend to make a stand. "Space and time," said Alexander, "will be on our side. If Napoleon wants peace, he must make it in Kamchatka." And one of his ministers wrote to him with prophetic wisdom, "We can win by stubbornly waging a defensive war, fighting as we retreat. If the enemy pursues us, he will perish: the farther he goes from his stores of provisions and ammunition, the farther he penetrates a land without roads and without supplies, the more pitiable his condition will be . . ." One of his best generals, Barclay de Tolly, a man of Scottish descent, advised the same thing, and Alexander, against the wishes of other generals, made him commander-in-chief. So the Russian armies retreated before the invaders, fighting the French advance guard, delaying Napoleon with little battles, drawing him deeper and deeper into the country. Meanwhile the people of the towns and villages along his route were told to leave their homes and to destroy whatever they could not take with them. The invading horde marched through ruined villages, whose barns and houses still smoked; half-grown grain was standing in the fields, but men and animals had gone.

As soon as they entered Russia, they suffered from the climate. At first it was hot; then a chilly, drenching rain turned the roads to mud and sickened the men who slept, wet and cold, on the sodden ground. The storm was followed by blazing heat such as they had never felt before. "The climate is always in extremes," wrote a young French officer. "There is either drought or floods; it either burns or freezes. The heat weakened our bodies and so left them defenseless against the frost that was so soon to pierce them."

Thousands of horses died from eating the unripe grain that stood in the fields, for they had no other fodder. The wagons or the cannon they had drawn were left on the roadside. The soldiers' supplies gave out and they had to pillage, bands of them riding far and wide over the country, trying to find cattle or food that the people had left behind in their haste; Cossacks fell upon some of these bands and drove them back or took them prisoners. After dark, hundreds of men, particularly those who were not French, stole away from the army, preferring captivity to hunger and death. But the main army marched patiently on, exhausted and hungry, "in a flaming dust," over roads whose thick sand dragged at feet and wheels, through endless forests and empty fields. They took Vitebsk, where they found stores of food and drink; then they moved on to Smolensk, that ancient and holy city, one of the frontier fortresses of Russia, on the southern bank of the Dnieper.

Part of the Grand Army had been left at the border to guard the rear; regiments had to be left in conquered towns, and along the route, to keep it open. Three hundred thousand men had marched into Russia but before they had fought a big battle, by the time they had reached Smolensk, half that number had been lost, through sickness, exposure, desertion and continual small battles.

The two Russian armies met at last at Smolensk, in mid-August, and decided that they must make a stand there. They put up as stubborn a fight as they could and left the city only

when it had caught fire from the French shells, hundreds of its citizens and wounded soldiers perishing in the flames. The Russians then marched toward the east, lighted by the flames that leaped up into the night like a volcano in eruption. In the French camp one of Napoleon's officers, who knew Russia well, watched the fire with horror. He felt a hand on his shoulder and heard Napoleon's pleased voice say, "What a magnificent spectacle!" "Horrible, Sire!" he answered. "Bah!" said Napoleon coarsely. "Remember, an enemy's corpse always smells sweet."

The two Russian armies were put under the command of Prince Kutuzov, a sixty-seven-year-old general who had fought under Suvorov in Turkey and Europe. His army grew while the French army melted away; by September they were nearly equal. Napoleon was pushing on toward Moscow, and Kutuzov resolved to stop him if possible. They met in a desperate and bloody battle at Borodino, seventy miles from Moscow. Both armies lost nearly half their men; both sides claimed the victory. But the Russian army withdrew after the battle, retreating toward Moscow, and Napoleon's army followed.

The weather was clear and cool now and the spirits of Napoleon's soldiers rose. On the morning of the 14th of September he and his officers rode up the slope of the Sparrow Hills west of Moscow and saw a sight that made them catch their breaths. Below them curved the Moskva River between green fields; here and there, behind trees, were handsome country houses and the low roofs of villages. Before them, serene in the sunlight, lay Moscow, within its triple walls, lifting to the sky its hundreds of golden cupolas and their flashing crosses. The city looked immense, for its large houses, with their many stables and outbuildings, were set in gardens and orchards; these merged with the suburbs and the suburbs were lost in the meadows and woods of the plain. In the center of the city rose the massive walls, the towers and domes of the Kremlin, and highest of all the tower of Ivan the Great. It was different from anything the French had

ever seen, for it had a touch of Asia in it and seemed to them like a city of the Arabian Nights.

"Moscow! Moscow!" they cried, like weary sailors sighting land. "So that is the great city," said Napoleon. "It is high time. Let a police force be established to keep order; send a deputation of boyars to me at once with the keys of the city!" He did not know that boyars no longer existed and that a police force was not necessary.

When his advance guard entered the city they had a strange experience. There was no one in the streets. The French cavalry clattered along, hearing nothing but the sound of their horses' hoofs; they looked down long avenues and then back over their own shoulders to see if they were followed. They peered into churches and saw candles flickering before the altar screens; they pushed open the doors of houses and heard clocks ticking in empty rooms. What had happened? They knew that the Russian army had just passed through, but what had become of the hundreds of thousands of citizens? They came to one of the gates of the Kremlin and had to shoot open its thick door. Inside it a few ragged men threw themselves upon the soldiers. They were easily killed and there was no one else there.

Moscow was deserted. Many people had left as their own army and the enemy army drew near; thousands more followed the Russian army as it retreated toward the east. They streamed out over the roads in every direction, carrying whatever they could in carts and wagons, seeking refuge with friends or family. Only a few refused to leave or could not; many French people — tutors and governesses, actors and shopkeepers — stayed, but they were only a few thousand out of a quarter of a million people.

No one offered the keys of the city to Napoleon; no one came to bend the knee before him. It was very disappointing: he had meant to be so gracious to them. After waiting for an hour or two on the Sparrow Hills, he rode down into the suburbs and spent the night in a tavern. That night the sky was lurid, because

the great bazaar on the Red Square had caught fire. The French tried to stop it but could not; meanwhile the soldiers dragged out of it all that they could: bales of silk and cotton, furs, jewels, wines and exotic foods.

Next day Napoleon went to the Kremlin and examined its treasures; he slept in the palace of the Tsars. All day long the soldiers looted the rich, empty city. During the night fire broke out again in several places; a strong wind whipped it into great flames that licked the sky and made the night like day. As the horrified conquerors watched, they saw fire break out again and again and then spread under the wind, which blew from the north and west, driving the flames toward the heart of the city. When morning came, they seemed to be living in the center of a furnace. The Kremlin, protected by the river and its own walls and grounds, was the safest place, but even there the fiery air stifled men; smoke, flaming brands, flakes of fire swept over it, while the French worked frantically to save the buildings and the powder magazines. In the afternoon they were able to get down to the river and escape; soldiers and citizens had been fleeing before the fire all day. Napoleon spent the night in a palace a few miles from the city.

For four days Moscow burned, as it had not burned since the days of the Tartars. The cupolas that had held their shining crosses aloft crashed to the ground; the handsome houses, many built of stone and brick, with all their comfortable and beautiful furnishings, burned to the ground and their gardens shriveled; the many wooden houses, large and small, kindled the larger buildings. Most of Moscow was destroyed: some accounts say three fourths of it, some say nine tenths. When the fire had nearly burned itself out, rain came on the wind and the acres of black ruins steamed and smoked sullenly.

Who had started the fire? No one knows for certain. The French, anxious to escape the blame, accused the Russians, who had so often left smoking ruins for their enemies; the Russians accused the pillaging soldiers. It may have been accidental: an

empty city, built largely of wood, with a marauding army and its own worst citizens wandering about it, easily catches fire.

The Kremlin fortunately, except for a few less important buildings, escaped destruction. Napoleon and his generals came back and looked gloomily at their conquest; the soldiers found quarters in partly burned houses, in churches, which, being more solidly built, still stood, and in the unburned part of the city. They searched everywhere for food and found plenty, for Russians, like Americans, keep their houses warm in winter and store their food in cellars. The soldiers found stores of food and grain and an abundance of wine. There were fine country places and farms, too, all round the great city.

What would Napoleon do? He was in the very heart of Russia, in its holiest and best-loved city, and still no one begged him for peace. He sent two envoys, one to Alexander and one to Kutuzov, with proposals for a peace. "I must have peace, I wish for peace, I absolutely will have peace!" he shouted to his envoy. But no answer came. Alexander and all his people were for once in accord: no peace with the invader while one foreign soldier was on Russian soil! It was very new and puzzling for Napoleon — this vast empty horizon and this silence — this ominous silence.

He stayed for five weeks in Moscow, considering whether to spend the winter there, or to march on St. Petersburg, or to pursue the Russian army, which had turned southward and encamped there. In the middle of October, worried because his mail from Paris was often delayed or destroyed by Cossacks, fearful lest his absence encourage revolt among his conquered subjects, or even among the French, he decided to return to France. His Master of the Horse, who had been French ambassador to Russia for four years, warned him against the coming cold. Napoleon laughed at him. "This Russian winter!" he said. "It is no worse than a French winter; it merely lasts longer. It is mid-October now and no colder than it is at home." That was true: the weather was beautiful and the cold unusually late in coming.

The French army, now about a hundred thousand strong,

started to file out of Moscow on October 19th, carrying with it, heaped on carts and carriages, the plunder of that ancient city: silks, velvets and furs, porcelains and paintings, jeweled icons, crosses and priests' robes; while several thousand foreign men, women and children, followed them. They meant to travel by a southern route, in order to go through country they had not already ravaged; but Kutuzov's army was waiting in the south and after one desperate battle Napoleon thought it best not to risk another. He turned back to the north and took the road to Smolensk. The Russian army followed along a parallel route to the south and bands of Cossacks were always on the horizon.

The French army, cumbered with its loot, with wounded and sick soldiers, with stragglers and strangers, went back through burned villages and stripped fields, over the battlefield of Borodino, where tens of thousands of unburied bodies still lay. There was no food for men or horses; the patient animals, dragging heavy loads for fourteen hours a day, fell in their harness and before they died were cut to pieces for food by the famished soldiers. Pillage was dangerous, for bands of Cossacks and peasants waited for the unwary and, since Moscow had burned, the Russians were merciless: any fate was better than to fall into their hands. For the same reason there were no deserters now. Even the animals and the birds pursued them: packs of fierce dogs, abandoned in Moscow and the villages, and flocks of ravens, ready to fight over any body that fell.

One day in early November the sky was overcast; then thick flakes of snow began to fall and soon covered the ground. Winter had come at last: cold was added to hunger and exhaustion. Snow hid the roads and clogged the feet; snow put the fires out, and on the snow, around the smouldering ashes, the men must sleep. The plunder of Moscow spilled out on the snow for the Cossacks to pick up; the sick and wounded were abandoned in their carts. And, unbelievable as the earlier lack of provisions had been, there was no means of rough-shoeing the horses and no one had thought, during the five weeks in Moscow, of mak-

ing runners to replace wheels when the snow should come. Batu would have laughed at them.

Only a few regiments stayed in formation and obeyed any orders. Most of the soldiers threw away their arms, wrapped themselves in anything they could find and thought of nothing but saving themselves. Out of the hundred thousand who left Moscow, fifty thousand men and a disorderly crowd of stragglers reached Smolensk.

The Russian army, following them, suffered too, but their spirits were high, they were better clothed, their horses were roughshod and their cannon drawn on sledges. Many of the officers and the Emperor himself blamed Kutuzov for not attacking the French army in its misery and capturing Napoleon. But Kutuzov, too old and fat to ride a horse, driven in a light carriage or a sleigh along with his army, was stubborn. "I have built a golden bridge for Napoleon," he said. "All I desire is that he march over it out of Russia." Cold, hunger and despair were driving the enemy over his golden bridge as fast as they could go and Kutuzov was content.

Late in November there was a thaw, at the worst possible time for the French, for they had to cross a river, the Berezina, a tributary of the Dnieper. The ice had broken and the ground was a thick slush; it was snowing and an icy wind pierced the soldiers' wet clothes and chilled their bones. While they were crossing, the Russian army that had returned from Turkey attacked them on both sides of the river. The French, in spite of their sufferings, fought with splendid courage and continued their retreat; but thousands were killed and most of the unfortunate people who had followed the army thus far, were drowned in the icy river or trampled to death in the panic of the crossing.

After that the retreat was a headlong flight. Fierce cold followed the thaw: the thermometer fell to zero, then to twenty, thirty and forty degrees below zero.* Frozen through, soldiers lay down and died, thankful to suffer no more; of those who

* *Fahrenheit.*

slept beside the campfires, only a few awoke in the morning. If they found houses standing, they set fire to them for warmth and often fell into the fire from weakness or madness, and died there. They ate raw horseflesh and, if necessary, the flesh of their fallen comrades, for no horror was spared them.

Early in December a few thousand men went through Vilna on their way to the Niemen. The people who had seen them march by six months before, and the French troops who had remained behind, looked at them with horror. For they were like scarecrows, their eyes wild and hollow, their faces black and bearded; they hugged round them tattered sheepskins or sable coats, their heads were wrapped in women's dresses or perhaps a rich altar cloth; their feet were bundles of rags. They were all that was left of the Grand Army, the three hundred thousand that had marched into Russia. Even after they reached Vilna, the cold was bitter and thousands died. In mid-December, of the half million men who had assembled under Napoleon, twenty thousand crossed the Niemen, and most of these had never been to Moscow.

During the seven weeks of the retreat Napoleon, wrapped in furs, had traveled in his carriage, and three hot meals, with white bread and good wines, had been served to him each day. Shortly after crossing the Berezina, feeling that his presence was necessary in France, he left the army and drove swiftly to Paris, where he arrived December 18th. "Well, gentlemen," he said curtly to his ministers, who had already heard the appalling news of the retreat, "Fortune dazzled me. I stayed too long in Moscow. I have made a great mistake; but I shall retrieve it."

By retrieving it he meant that he could raise a new army and fight again.

The Disillusioned Years

RUSSIA HAD suffered severely in the Patriotic War, especially along the route of invasion. About two hundred thousand sol-

diers had died; cities, towns and countless villages had been destroyed, thousands of peasants killed, ruined or displaced; Moscow burned and millions of rubles spent. The five-hundred-mile trail of dead bodies left pestilence in the air. The army had been through a terrible campaign; the people had made a mighty effort and had succeeded beyond their hopes. They needed rest and time to rebuild and restore.

But Alexander was now exalted by a new idea. The burning of Moscow had shocked him deeply. "The fire of Moscow lit up my soul," he said. "I came to know God and became another man." He saw in the great events of his time the hand of God. He wanted not only to free Europe from a tyrant but to make a lasting peace among the constantly quarreling nations. For both these purposes Napoleon must be decisively beaten. Therefore in January, 1813, only a few weeks after the last French stragglers had left Russian soil, Alexander crossed the Niemen, taking with him an unwilling Kutuzov and a still tired but powerful army.

For the next seven or eight years he spent more time in western Europe than in his own country and his actions there belong more to the history of other nations than to that of Russia. We shall take note, then, only of the events that directly affected the Russian people.

Napoleon made good his promise to his ministers. He "retrieved his mistake" by raising another large army, although he sadly missed the tens of thousands of horses that lay dead on the road to Moscow. He held out for nearly a year against Russia, England, Austria and Prussia; the two latter were glad enough to change sides and fight against instead of for their conqueror. At Leipzig, in Prussia, on the very anniversary of his departure from Moscow, Napoleon was defeated. At the end of March, 1814, Alexander, looking very handsome in his fine uniform and high plumed hat, rode into Paris between the King of Prussia and the Austrian commander-in-chief. In April Napoleon abdicated his crown and was sent to the island of Elba, off the coast of Italy; while the fat old brother of the former King of

France was put on the throne. Alexander, ironically enough, made him grant a constitution to his people before he was crowned. Then the kings and ministers of all the states of Europe met in Vienna to restore the Balance of Power that had been so disastrously upset.

During that fateful year Alexander had led the fight against Napoleon and was hailed everywhere as the liberator of Europe — the liberator of the world, indeed — the “Agamemnon of kings.” It was a time of triumph for him, though he gave the glory to God. Everything had come about in a seemingly miraculous way: he, who had been a poor soldier, had brought about the defeat of the greatest warrior that had appeared for many centuries; Russia, the backward, barbarous nation, was now the leader and savior of Europe. Now a peace must be made that would justify the shedding of so much blood. He went to Vienna with high hopes and resolutions, the Bible in his hand.

There he found, as so many men have found, that it is easier to make war than to make peace. The tyrant was overthrown, the nations breathed freely again: their only concern now was to reshuffle the cards, to rearrange the boundaries that Napoleon had changed, and out of this labor to get as much for themselves as possible. And Alexander, in spite of himself, was as keen as anyone at this game.

He sincerely wanted to right the wrong that his grandmother had done to Poland, but he wanted to do it in his own way: he demanded that Prussia and Austria give back the provinces they had taken in the three partitions and that Poland be made a kingdom — of which he himself would be king! His allies, of course, did not appreciate this plan; indeed, they secretly feared that Russia itself, with its vast resources and man power, might be the next to upset the Balance of Power. He found, to his sorrow, that they were allying themselves against him.

The work of the Congress was interrupted, in March, 1815, by the news that Napoleon had escaped from Elba to France and was gathering a wildly enthusiastic army about him. For a hun-

dred days he relived his old glory and then met a final defeat at Waterloo in Belgium. The Russian army was too far away to take part in this campaign; the glory went to the Prussians and to the English general, the Duke of Wellington. Alexander lost prestige. As a result of this outbreak of Napoleon's, troops of all the allied armies remained in France for three years, to make sure that no such thing would happen again. Some of the finest and most intelligent young Russian officers lived at leisure in the beautiful and brilliant city of Paris, one of the great centers of European culture. Their stay had far-reaching effects.

After this interruption the Congress of Vienna finished its work hastily. Alexander won, not the whole of Poland, which he had demanded, but a large part of it. When the Congress was over, he held an impressive review of his now magnificent army, after which he, the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia signed an agreement which they called the Holy Alliance, in which they stated that thereafter they would base their mutual relations "upon the sublime truths which the Holy Religion of our Saviour teaches . . . which, far from being applicable only to private concerns, must have an immediate influence upon the councils of princes and guide all their steps." This was Alexander's idea. Later, in Paris, another Alliance was formed between Russia, Austria, Prussia and England, the Quadruple Alliance, whose purpose was to prevent any further revolution from coming out of France, and to watch over the affairs of Europe. These alliances, Alexander hoped, might be the basis for a true and lasting peace. He went home in December, 1815.

For ten years Russia had been at war. From these wars it had gained, in territory, Finland, most of Poland, and Bessarabia. In 1801 Georgia, south of the Caucasus Mountains, had asked to be annexed to Russia. This was the beginning of the conquest of the whole Caucasus, a rich and beautiful region. Russia had also won the admiration and gratitude of those European countries whose pupil and imitator it had been hitherto. Alexander had

carried the work of Peter and Catherine a long step ahead. He himself had drunk deep of glory in Europe and in his own country had been given the title of "The Blessed."

Yet he came back home an embittered and unhappy man. The problems of his own country had been too great for him; the problems of Europe were also too great, and he had not been a match for the clever and cynical politicians of the older countries. He gathered his advisers about him again, but hope was gone. "Neither the government nor the army are what I desire, but what can I do to change them?" he asked petulantly. "Besides, where can I find the men to replace those now in office?" There were plenty of men: Speransky was there and Alexander's other old friends, and there were many young men who came back from Europe eager to help their own people. But Alexander did not ask for their help; out of them all he chose a man who had devotedly served his father, Paul. To this man, Arakcheyev, an honest but brutal soldier, he handed over the care of the country.

Burdened by the affairs of a whole continent, Alexander took refuge in religion, the Orthodox religion whose priests believed that they knew the whole truth and therefore shut out anything new and different, and who counted on miracles rather than action. Education was put under the direction of the Church, until, in the universities, even a triangle could not be mentioned except as a symbol of the Trinity. Since the Church wanted no change, new ideas must be kept out; therefore the secret police and censorship of the press were brought to life again, to stop the vigorous new thoughts that Alexander himself had once cherished. Pushkin, Russia's greatest poet, was exiled to Bessarabia because he had written an "Ode to Freedom" and some biting verses on the Emperor's favorites.

Alexander was far from happy. He traveled restlessly about Russia and went often to Europe to meetings of the Quadruple and the Holy Alliances. These, too, were not what he had dreamed: they, too, had become police forces whose purpose

was to prevent any changes, any sort of revolution in Europe. When the Greeks, who were Orthodox and looked to Russia for protection and encouragement, rebelled against the Turks, Alexander saw in them only subjects who were rebelling against their rulers and he would not help them. Alas for Alexander!

In 1825, when he was forty-seven years old, he went with the Empress, who was ill, to Taganrog, on the Sea of Azov, for her health. He caught a chill there and died. But there is a mystery about his death. There seems to be some reason to believe that he did not die, that another man's body was substituted for his, and that Alexander left Taganrog as a free and penniless pilgrim and died in his old age, a saintly hermit in Siberia. The mystery is unsolved, but it is pleasant to think that perhaps, after the great and disturbing experiences of his life as Emperor, he wandered alone over the wide horizons of Russia and found peace for his soul.

Alexander was the last of the great autocrats. Hitherto the autocracy had served the people, even though it oppressed them. Ivan the Great had unified Russia and freed it from the Tartars; Peter made it a European country, strong enough to withstand the domination of other European nations; Catherine had made its southern frontier safe and had changed the fertile steppe from a battlefield to a granary; enormous territory had been added to it under these rulers. As an empire Russia reached the peak of its development in Alexander's reign. It was powerful, respected and safe; no enemy would dare to attack it after Napoleon had failed. If Alexander had been greater than he was, he might have freed his people from the bondage that the national danger had laid upon them; he might have shared the burden of an autocracy that was no longer needed, with the able men who were so eager to share it and with the people who were so deeply experienced in self-government. It was his tragedy as well as theirs that he could not do so.

Although he abandoned his ideals and his fine plans, other men did not. Not he nor the kings of Prussia and Austria were strong enough to stop the surge of new ideas that had arisen in Europe. After his day, the fate of Russia was no longer in the hands of its emperors; it had passed into the hands of other men, who looked forward and not back.



CHAPTER XV

INTELLIGENTSIA VERSUS AUTOCRACY

The Fourteenth of December, 1825

SOME OF THE officers of the Russian army, having spent several years in Europe and having occupied Paris, came back in quite a different mood from that of Alexander. They were young and came from the noblest families of Russia; most of them spoke French more easily than they did Russian, and had gone into Europe not as strangers but as the equals of anyone they met there, in intelligence and culture. They came back deeply stirred by all that they had seen and heard: by the vigorous intellectual life and the exciting talk, by the great arts, the freedom of thought and speech, the greater dignity of the peasants and workmen, and the fact that everyone was not always under the suspicious and restraining hand of the government.

They came back to their own country eager to give their lives to its service. The first thing they saw when they landed in St. Petersburg was the police beating back with their clubs the

people who were crowding forward to see the soldiers. Indeed, some of the officers saw their beloved Emperor himself, furiously, with drawn sword, chasing a peasant off the square where the returning troops were to be received. The young men were ashamed for him and their hearts sank.

They soon found that this scene was a true indication of what was going on all over Russia and that they could not protest against it or even speak of it without endangering their own lives. "Why can we not even speak about our own rights?" they asked each other. "Did we free Europe only to be put in chains at home? Did we give France a constitution and now dare not speak of it? Did we buy with our blood leadership among the nations only to be humiliated in our own country?"

They found out, too, that their lives as officers of the Guards, which most of them were, offered them nothing but the endless parades that all the emperors loved, and balls and card parties in the evenings. After their life abroad, they were unspeakably bored. They met together, therefore, to talk and to plan. They formed a secret society which they called the Society of Welfare, devoted to the improvement of health, justice and education, but pledged also to the freeing of the serfs and to the adoption of a constitution, which should limit the power of the Emperor and give the people a share in the government. They also believed that Poland should be free and they invited Poles to join them.

Since they, like Speransky, considered everything in Russia wrong, from top to bottom, they proposed many different remedies. Some wanted a constitutional monarchy, like that of England; some a republic, like that of the United States; some wanted to assassinate the Emperor, others to educate and persuade the people; some were atheists and others deeply religious. The more radical group, led by Paul Pestel, had their headquarters in Ukraine, where Pestel's regiment was on duty; the milder group, who wanted a constitutional monarchy, met in St. Petersburg, under the leadership of the poet, Ryleyev. They were known as the Northern and the Southern groups. These

were men who could have served Alexander better than the ignorant and brutal Arakcheyev, had he only called upon them.

While they were still secretly working on their plans and attracting new members to their Society, Alexander died, in November, 1825. They had planned to present their demands when he died, for they knew that the accession of a new emperor was a good time to ask for reforms. But this sudden death surprised them, as Alexander was well and in the prime of life when he went to Taganrog. Nevertheless, his death offered them a rare opportunity, and they decided that they must take it and act at once.

Alexander left no children, but he had three brothers: the eldest, Constantine, was a rough, eccentric man like his father, Paul, and was at this time viceroy of Poland; the next brother, Nicholas, was nineteen years younger than Alexander, more like a son to him than a brother. Constantine had given up his right to the throne because he wanted to marry a Polish lady; so Alexander had named Nicholas as his heir but for some strange reason did not tell him that he had done so. Therefore each brother recognized the other as Emperor and it was several weeks before the matter was settled. December 14th was finally named as the day when the army would swear allegiance to the new Emperor.

The members of the Northern Society, although they were not prepared, resolved to act nonetheless. "I foresee that we shall not succeed," Ryleyev said to his companions, "but an upheaval is necessary to awaken Russia and with our failure we shall teach others." "We shall die," said another. "Oh, how gloriously we shall die!"

Early on the dark winter morning of the 14th, the conspirators persuaded a battalion of soldiers to refuse to take the oath of allegiance to Nicholas and to demand "Constantine and a Constitution!" The soldiers did not know what a constitution meant but they disliked Nicholas and, when promised better pay and a shorter term of service, they agreed. They marched to the Sen-

ate Square, where the bronze statue of Peter the Great, which Catherine erected, rises from a granite rock. A few other soldiers joined them, led by other members of the Society. The rebels did not want Constantine; they merely used his name to cause a delay and a mutiny. They meant to set up a provisional government and to call an assembly of the people to demand a constitution.

The revolt was hopeless, as Ryleyev had known it would be; and it was badly carried out, at that. The man who should have led it never appeared and the others did not know what to do; the soldiers stood all day on the Square, hardly knowing why they were there and doing nothing. The government was nonplussed; Nicholas himself did not want to start his reign with bloodshed, but at last, as night was coming on, he ordered the artillery to clear the Square with grapeshot. Several hundred soldiers and citizens were killed or wounded and the rebels dispersed. "A nice beginning to my reign!" said Nicholas. But it was really the end of Alexander's reign.

At about the same time, the Southern Society was betrayed by one of its members and from both groups nearly six hundred young men were arrested and brought to trial. The soldiers who had taken part in the revolts were flogged and sent to fight in the Caucasus or the Far East.

The prisoners were heavily chained and shut into the damp cells of the dreaded fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, which stands on an island in the Neva, opposite the Emperor's palace. They were carefully examined for several months, most of them being questioned by the Emperor himself. Several broke down, repented, and confessed all that they knew. Others wrote long letters from prison to the Emperor, hoping to make him understand, telling him all their hopes. "The people have conceived a sacred truth," wrote one of them, "that they do not exist for governments but that governments must be organized for them. This is the cause of the struggle in all countries: people, after tasting the sweetness of enlightenment and freedom, strive to-

ward them." "Sire! In order to root out free thought, it is necessary to destroy a whole generation, born and educated in the last reign," wrote another. "Spread the light of science and education," said a third, "and the restless and rebellious will vanish like darkness before the sun."

In July the sentence was passed: about half the six hundred were acquitted and about half the rest were given light punishment. One hundred and twenty-one were considered the guiltiest: of these five were to be hanged, thirty-one sentenced to hard labor for life in Siberia, eighty-five to shorter terms of labor and to life exile.

There had been very few death sentences since Empress Elizabeth's day and people were shocked by it. German workmen had to be hired to build the gallows and the hanging was done so badly that three of the five men fell through the nooses and had to be hanged again. "Unhappy Russia!" said one of them. "It cannot even hang a man properly." Ryleyev and Pestel were two of those hanged. On the same day the exiles, still in chains, started on the long road into Siberia.

When a man was exiled for life to Siberia, for political reasons, he died as far as his country was concerned: he lost any titles he held, his property went to his heirs, he had no rights at all. He was usually sent to a distant town or village where he found lodging or had a small cabin of his own. If his family could send him money, it was doled out to him as he needed it; if they could not or did not care to, the government gave him an allowance that barely kept him alive, and two sets of clothing, one for winter and one for summer, each year. There, thousands of miles from his family, his friends and all that he cared for, he lived as best he could. The enormous distances and the long frozen winter, made escape almost impossible.

The Decembrists, as these revolutionists were called, were scattered in small groups over thousands of miles of wilderness, so that they could conspire no more. Some were sent to the desolate village of Berezov, on the Ob River, beyond the Arctic

Circle; here Peter's friend Menshikov had spent his last days building a little wooden church in front of which he was buried. Some were sent farther up the Ob; others to Ilinsk, between the Yenisei and the Lena. Here, a generation before, had been exiled the brave Radischev, who wrote of his journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow. Others went through Tobolsk, where one of the earliest exiles, the bell of Uglich which had rung the alarm for the murder of the little Dmitri, still hung. Past Tobolsk, on and on over the flowery steppe, under the hot summer sun, and through endless forest, southeastward to Irkutsk near Lake Baikal and beyond that they went, to Chita and Nerchinsk, four thousand miles from all they loved. At Nerchinsk they worked in the mines and slept in small, filthy cells. Some were sent down the Lena to Yakutsk, the coldest place in the world; the largest group was sent to Chita where, for a few years they lived under close watch in a prison and worked in a flour mill and on the roads. After about fifteen years of hard labor, all of them were "settled" in or near the towns where they had worked.

Some of their wives gave up their luxurious homes and their families and joined their husbands, bringing joy and comfort in their visits to the grim and dirty prison, living cheerfully later in the log cabins of the dreary little towns. Some of the younger men, for most of them were in their twenties, married girls whom they met in Siberia; gradually they overcame the despair that followed the loss of all their hopes, the waste of all their gifts, and lived useful lives in exile. They opened schools, experimented in growing fruits and vegetables, collected the songs and stories of the native peoples, made their rough homes centers of social and intellectual life. They left their mark on Siberia, where they are still remembered.

Their futile revolt shocked Russia deeply. It was not like a peasant or a Cossack uprising; it was not the sort of revolt that had put Catherine and Alexander on the throne — the murder of an undesirable emperor in order to put another in his place. This was an attack on autocracy itself, by the class that had been

its chief support — the nobility. It was the first attempt at revolution.

It failed not only because the leaders were inexperienced and did not know how to bring about what they desired, but because they were so few — a few hundred among some fifty million — and because they had no support among the people. The soldiers did not understand them and the peasants knew nothing about them. In other countries either revolution or peaceful change and growth were brought about largely by the middle class, the townspeople or bourgeoisie. In Russia there was practically no middle class: the merchants and tradesmen were few and ignorant; they stood apart from the peasants and were looked down upon by the upper class. Educated men like the Decembrists had no one to turn to but other educated men like themselves, and they were very few. These men, no matter what class they belonged to, came to be called the intelligentsia — the intelligence of Russia — and it was they who took from the emperors' hands the fate of the Russian people.

The Intelligentsia

AFTER THE Decembrists had been hanged or exiled, there was a service of thanksgiving in the Senate Square, where the rebellion had taken place. There was also a service in one of the squares of the Kremlin. The priests in their rich vestments, carrying banners and icons, came out into the sunlit summer air, under the domes of the old cathedrals; the Emperor, his family and ministers of state, and the even ranks of the Guards faced the priests, and behind them pressed a great crowd of people. From the walls the cannon thundered to celebrate the victory of the Autocrat of all the Russias over his subjects.

Among the crowd a fourteen-year-old boy stood rigid. He did not know much about what had happened, although he had heard it discussed in his father's comfortable house; but he felt passionately that he could not be on the side of the cannon, the

prison and the gallows. During that ceremony, as he wrote later when he was a man, "On the spot, before that altar defiled by bloody rites, I swore to avenge the murdered men and dedicated myself to the struggle with that throne, with that altar, with those cannons."

He kept his promise, but the fight was a hard one and the enemy was powerful and wily. For a hundred years, starting from Alexander's return from Europe, the emperors of Russia and their chosen ministers fought, with every weapon known to them, against their finest and most gifted subjects.

This boy, whose name was Alexander Herzen, was the son of a rich landowner. He was born in 1812 and was in Moscow when it burned, because his father had delayed too long in leaving. His young mother and the servants, holding the baby, were allowed to leave, after the fire, only because Napoleon chose his father to carry a message of peace to the Emperor Alexander. The boy grew up, as so many of the intelligentsia did, in the comfort of a big house in the city — for Moscow was soon built up again — and, in the summers, on a country estate surrounded by its gardens, woods and cultivated fields, overlooking a quiet river. Near by was the serf village; the house rambled off into endless servants' quarters, stables and outbuildings. Life was very pleasant in such a house: peace and beauty surrounded the owners and their needs were cared for by a flock of servants. Even when he went to the university young Herzen was followed by a footman, a circumstance that he detested, although his servants were among his best friends.

He enjoyed himself immensely at the university in Moscow, for he had been educated at home by German and French tutors and it was exciting to meet other young men and to find food for his brilliant mind. The university was the center of intellectual life, as Moscow was the heart of the country. Although it was carefully watched by the police and the ministers of education, it was far from the court and the seat of government; it had learned professors and eager students. The young men studied

science, history, mathematics and military strategy; they read poetry, philosophy and sociology in German, French and English, and they talked all night. They knew the evils and injustices in their own country and longed to put an end to them; they also knew that a word of criticism from them might send them to Siberia with the Decembrists, whose memory they worshipped. "The danger," Herzen said, "strung up our tense nerves, made our hearts beat faster, and made us love each other with greater devotion."

In the summer of 1834, when he was twenty-two, he was arrested: that is, he was waked in the middle of the night, the favorite time for arrests, by a police officer, his room was searched and he was taken to prison, no reason being given. He found that his best friend and twenty other students had also been arrested. About ten days afterward he was examined, the chief questions being, "Do you belong to any secret society, literary or otherwise? Who are its members? Where do they meet?" Herzen could honestly say that he belonged to none, but that made little difference. A group of students had given a party and had sung a song which referred disrespectfully to the Emperor. Herzen and his friend had not been at the party but that, too, made no difference. After living in prison for nine months all the young men were sentenced: three to imprisonment in the terrible Schlüsselburg Fortress at the mouth of the Neva, six to exile in distant provinces and the rest to probation under police supervision. Herzen was among the six exiled: he was sent to Viatka, a provincial town on the Viatka River, where he was given a clerk's job in a government office. There he stayed for several years.

Herzen and his friends were men who, like the Decembrists, would gladly have served their government and done their utmost to improve their country. There were other men, with different gifts, born at about this same time, who should also have been precious to their country. For Russia, roused out of its mental sleep a hundred years before by Peter, was now wide awake and its talents, artistic and literary, were as great as those

of any other people. The extraordinary thing was that those talents, because of the country's violent history and for various reasons already given, had remained hidden until now. Russia's culture, one might say, was born under Peter and came of age in the early nineteenth century.

How did the autocracy, embodied in the cold, narrow-minded, conscientious Nicholas, deal with its artists?

Alexander Pushkin had been banished to Bessarabia by the Emperor Alexander. He was a wild young man and behaved so badly even in exile that he was recalled in four years and ordered to stay on his family's estate near Pskov. Because he was there he escaped the punishment of the Decembrists, several of whom were his friends. Nicholas, a little ashamed, perhaps, of keeping Russia's greatest poet in exile, gave him a position at court and undertook to censor his poems himself. There is something comic as well as tragic in the picture of the sober, ungifted Emperor passing judgment on the poems. Pushkin languished at court and was killed in a duel when he was thirty-eight.

During his short life he started the great tradition of Russian literature, for he gave it a form and a voice.

In Peter's time there was no written Russian language; any writing had to be done in the old Church Slavonic, an unused language very different from what was spoken. Peter, with his usual energy, had an alphabet made for the spoken language, based on the Slavonic, but simpler. After that, people had a tool to write with; but they were not at ease with it. Other countries had rich and varied literature; it was natural for the Russians to imitate European literature at first. During the eighteenth century it was fashionable in Europe to imitate Greek and Latin writers; therefore the Russians were imitating people who were imitating other people and this is not the way to produce great art. Besides, Greece and Rome meant nothing to Russia, whose only source of culture had been Byzantium. Writers were pioneers, trying to find their way where there was no road nor path.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the educated peo-

ple found to their amazement that, while they were just beginning to create a literature, the peasants whom they despised had possessed, for many centuries, a rich and varied literature — the bylinas, the fairy tales and folk songs. These were discovered and published, with pride and delight, and they proved to be the path which the greatest of Russian writers followed.

Pushkin was the first to recognize it. His first long poem was based on a folk tale he had heard from his nurse; the language he used was what everyone spoke, free of imitation or borrowed words, and he used it with exquisite grace and simplicity. There was no need to write of Greek nymphs and shepherds: Russia offered all that the poet needed. Pushkin's greatest poem was about the tragedy of his time: the story of a rich and clever young man whose soul dies because there is nothing for him to do but go to parties, make love and idle. All the subjects of his poetry and prose were taken from Russian life.

The great musicians who were born during the first half of the century — Glinka, Borodin, Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakoff, Tchaikovsky — took their inspiration from the same source. Many of their greatest compositions carried into the realm of music the folk tales, the traditions, the dramatic historical events of their own land.

When Pushkin was killed, a younger poet, named Lermontov, wrote a lament for him, accusing the idle court of his death:

*You that in greedy throng stand round the throne,
Hangmen of freedom, genius and fame . . .*

This, of course, sent *him* into exile, into the army of the Caucasus, and he, too, was killed in a duel when he was twenty-seven. He wrote a novel as well as poetry, and his hero, too, was the clever, frustrated young man whom he calls, "The Hero of our Time."

It was a hard time to be an artist. "The devil must have been in me," said Pushkin, "to be born in Russia — and with talent." Two writers, besides Ryleyev, were among the Decembrists and

were exiled; others had to serve in the army for having dared to write about freedom or about the life of the serfs. The writings for which they were exiled were of course not published — everything was examined by the censors before it could be published — but they were passed from hand to hand in manuscript, copied again and again, and passed on until they were known by heart all over Russia. "The writer," one man said, "as if he were a thief, used any trick to get his thought through to the public between the lines. The written word tore itself from the censor's hands and entered God's world crumpled and torn and was welcomed by the public as a token of victory or keenly relished as a forbidden, secret and tempting fruit." So stupid is the censor!

For nothing could stop the flow of genius that had finally been released.

Plays followed poems; novels followed plays, and in novel-writing the Russians equalled the greatest writers of other countries. Gogol, a Ukrainian, published his first stories in 1829. Like Pushkin, he wrote about Russians in simple and powerful language. Turgenev's first novel appeared in 1845 and Dostoevsky's in the same year. At the end of Nicholas' reign, in 1852, young Lev Tolstoi wrote his first story. And there were many others, less well-known abroad, who enriched the life of Russia as only artists can enrich a nation's life.

Artists have keen eyes and, usually, generous hearts. These men saw their country's failings and its virtues, and criticized it mercilessly, under the guise of fiction which hid their meaning from the censor but not from their readers. Gogol had an irrepressible sense of humor and a sharp, satiric pen. In his delightful comedy, *The Inspector-General*, he ridiculed all officialdom; in his great novel, *Dead Souls*, he did as much to discredit serfdom as he could have done by a rebellion. Turgenev did as much by merely telling what he saw, without expressing any opinion about it, unless through the words of the characters in his stories. He and Gogol escaped persecution but chose to live abroad a large part of their lives.

Dostoievsky was not so fortunate. He came to St. Petersburg as a young man, made an immediate success with his first novel, and was received among the intellectual circles of the city. He joined a group of young men who met together to read the books of French socialists and to discuss socialism as a possible solution of Russia's troubles. Twenty of them were arrested and, after the usual eight or nine months' imprisonment, were condemned to death. On an early December morning they were led to the gallows where, standing in their shirts in the freezing cold, they heard their death sentences. Only then did an officer gallop up with a reprieve, changing their sentence to exile. This was a little joke of the Emperor's, to frighten the young men, a joke that drove one of them mad.

Dostoievsky spent four years in Siberia at hard labor among common criminals. He was deeply hurt to find that the other prisoners never considered him one of them, although he lived, dressed, ate and suffered just as they did. To them he was one of the upper class, their oppressors. "You are vultures with iron beaks," one of them said to him. "You peck us to death." After the four years, which he tells about in his book, *The House of the Dead*, he was sent to the army for six years and at last, broken in health and saddened, was allowed to write in peace the great novels which, with those of Gogol and Turgenev, were the first Russian books to be read and admired abroad.

Alexander Herzen found, even when he returned from his exile, that he was watched by the police and could never say or write what was in his heart. He went abroad in 1847, giving as excuse the delicate health of his wife. He never returned home. "I sacrifice everything," he wrote to his friends, "for the dignity of man and for freedom of speech. Here in a foreign land I am your uncensored speech, your free voice." He made his home in England, where he published a magazine called *The Polar Star*, on whose cover were drawn, in profile, the heads of the five Decembrists whose deaths he had sworn to avenge. In it he published poems and articles that were forbidden in Russia, as well

as his own writings. He published also a paper called *Kolokol* — *The Bell* — whose motto was, "I summon the living, I toll for the dead, I break the thunderbolts," an inscription taken from a medieval bell. Hundreds of copies of his papers were smuggled into Russia and passed from hand to hand until they fell to pieces.

The End of Serfdom

IN HIS own way, Nicholas, who was conscientious and hard-working, did what he could for his country. Speransky, whose brilliant gifts had been wasted, made a new code of laws; for none had been made since Tsar Alexei's day. The life of the Crown peasants was improved, mildly. But Nicholas, like so many other emperors who, with each new generation, became less Russian and more German, felt more at ease with foreign problems than with Russian ones.

The empire of Russia had not stopped growing since the time of Ivan Kalita; every reign added to its extent. Ever since Georgia had been annexed in 1801, Russia had been trying to conquer the Caucasus Mountains, that great range that runs between the Black Sea and the Caspian, rising at its highest peak to 18,000 feet. The mountains were steep and very beautiful, quite different from the flat or rolling plains of Russia; they were inhabited by brave and warlike mountaineers, whose ways of fighting were very different, too, from those of the Russians. The annexation of Georgia had cost Russia two wars with Persia and one with Turkey, and war with the mountain tribes never stopped completely. Thousands of men were poured into these wars; a sentence to the army of the Caucasus was usually a sentence of death. Lermontov had died there; Pushkin had visited it in his exile. Both poets, inspired by the fantastic beauty of peaks and cataracts, had written about it. Most of the Caucasus was conquered in Nicholas' reign, although the final victory came after his death.

Mountaineers, however fierce and brave, were easier to defeat

than the civilized nations of the West. Under Nicholas, Russia was to suffer a serious defeat in Europe.

We have seen how, one by one, Russia's old enemies weakened and fell before it. The Tartars, whose very name had once been so terrifying, were now peaceful shepherds and farmers under Russian rule. Turkey, the last of the nomad empires, was now going the way of the rest. Its territory stretched from Algeria in North Africa, round the eastern coast of the Mediterranean to the Balkan peninsula, but its hold was weak. A strong leader had risen up in Egypt, who defied the Sultan; and one after another of the Balkan peoples struggled for its freedom. "Turkey is a sick man," Nicholas said once to the British ambassador, "a very sick man. It would be a serious mistake not to plan beforehand what is to be done if he should die." In this rather diplomatic language he was offering to divide Turkey with England; but England was building up a powerful empire in India and other parts of the East and did not want to entangle itself with Russia. France and Austria were also interested in the fate of "the sick man" and Nicholas knew that none of these nations would let him do as he liked in Turkey.

He thought, therefore, that the best thing would be to make Turkey dependent on Russia and so get control over it. When the Sultan needed help against Egypt, Nicholas helped him and in return the Sultan gave Russian ships special privileges in going through the Straits. Russia also claimed the right to protect the Christians who lived in the Turkish Empire, as most of them belonged to the Orthodox Church. This, together with the privileges given to Russian ships, alarmed the other nations, for the claim to protect the Christians gave Russia the right to march into Turkey whenever it thought, or imagined, that Christians were being ill-treated, as they often were. The Balance of Power in eastern Europe seemed to be in danger: France and England decided that Russia must be restrained.

The result was a war, known as the Crimean War, because most of the fighting took place on that peninsula, so proudly

won by Catherine. It began between Russia and Turkey in the autumn of 1853; France and England came in during the winter on Turkey's side, and it ended in the autumn of 1855, when Sevastopol, Russia's naval base on the Black Sea, surrendered to the French and British, after a siege of eleven months. In the treaty of peace Russia had to give up its claim to protect the Christians and gave up also its Black Sea fleet; for the Black Sea was closed by the treaty to warships of any nation, although it remained open to merchant ships.

The war was a shock to the Russians, who had not been so badly defeated since Peter had surrendered to Turkey on the Pruth River a hundred and fifty years before. They must give up their old dreams of conquering Tsargrad and of dominating Turkey. And the reputation that Alexander I had won was ruined: the Russian army was no longer feared.

But all these losses were less serious than other things that had been learned during the war. Wars test the spirit and the health of a nation. The Crimean War showed all the world that Russia, as well as Turkey, was sick; that exiling its best men, refusing to listen to criticism, and keeping nine tenths of its people in slavery were not good ideas after all. The Russian soldier had fought, as usual, bravely and stubbornly, but he was poorly supported by his government. More than a quarter of a million Russian soldiers died during the war, less from wounds than from sickness, exposure and hunger. Dishonesty, the age-old sin of the Russian official, was rampant: supplies were not sent or arrived too late; there were not enough medicines or doctors; shoes and overcoats fell to pieces because half the money that should have been spent on them went into official pockets. Reinforcements came from England and France sooner than from Russia; across the dry steppe of Crimea there was a trail of dead men and horses and of loaded wagons.

Nicholas, seeing this, was heart-broken; he died before Sevastopol fell and his son, Alexander II, came to the throne. As soon

as the peace treaty was signed, he announced that reforms would be made.

First, the censorship was relaxed: that is, writings were to be censored *after* they were published, not before. A flood of criticism, dammed for nearly fifty years, poured forth in newspapers, magazines and books, demanding freedom of speech, freedom for the serfs, representative government, and a stop to the ceaseless beating and flogging of the lower classes.

During the thirty years of Nicholas' reign, which seemed so deadly quiet, there had been an average of twenty-three peasant uprisings every year, about two a month. Uprisings meant that peasants murdered a landowner or a brutal overseer, "let fly the red cock" and burned the owner's houses and barns, or banded together to resist the paying of taxes, or being deported to Siberia or to the army or to factory work; until soldiers were sent against them, to beat them back into obedience.

Alexander proposed to free the serfs, and when his ministers offered the usual objections, he said, "It is better to abolish it from above than to have it abolished from below."

Then he asked the landowners to suggest the best way to free the peasants. There were many difficulties, for the serfs were still the foundation of the state; the village communes were like the bricks in a building. What might happen if they were dislodged; if the bricks were free to walk off over the wide expanses of Russia? Should the peasant be given land when he was freed; if so, how much? Should it be taken from the landowner outright, or should he be paid for his loss? If so, who should pay him, the state or the peasant who got the land? Should individual peasants own the land, or the communes?

Committees were formed in the provinces to discuss these matters and report their opinions. When the committee reports were received a commission was appointed by the Emperor to make a final decision, with his approval, of course. In a very short time, all things considered, a law was drawn up abolishing serfdom.

It was signed by the Emperor on February 19th, 1861, just before the Civil War, which was to free the Negro slaves, broke out in the United States.

All privately owned serfs immediately received their freedom, and their lives were thenceforth ordered not by their masters' wills but by their own communal governments. About half the landowners' domains was given, not to individual peasants, but to the village communes. The landowners were paid a certain sum by the state for this land and the communes were to repay this sum to the state over a period of forty-nine years. The commune owned the land and was still responsible for the taxes; the individual, therefore, was still bound to the commune and could not leave without its permission. This prevented the break-up of the commune, of which Russia was now very proud, considering it far superior to the Western principle of private property.

House serfs were to be completely free, after two years, but were not given any land. The Crown peasants were also freed, a year or two later, and usually given more land than was given to the landowners' serfs.

This was a mighty step forward. It did not solve the peasants' troubles: they were still poor, ignorant and sometimes worse off than they were before, but at least they were no man's slaves, to be beaten, sold, married or sent to the army at a master's pleasure. The intelligent and hard-working ones had a chance now to make a better life for themselves.

Alexander II made other important reforms. The courts of justice, so-called, had always been a disgrace, for "justice" had to be paid for in bribes to everyone, from the lowest clerk to the highest judge. Alexander introduced trial by jury and easily found able and honest men to administer justice.

He also established councils in the provinces and the districts, made up of members elected by the landowners, the peasant communes and the towns. They were called *zemstvos* (from *zemlia*, land) and took the responsibility that had once been

the landowners'. The zemstvos looked after the people's welfare: their health, education, the building of roads and hospitals and schools. They were successful, as far as they were allowed to be (for they were given no great power); good men in the provinces threw themselves gladly into the work, thankful for the chance to do something. Only one thing was lacking: the national assembly, which had once existed. If that had been summoned, there would have been a continuous chain of government, from the commune to the Emperor. But it was not summoned.

When Alexander Herzen, in London, read in the papers that the serfs had been freed, he called his family joyfully together and told them that they must have a celebration. "We shall invite all the Russian and Polish exiles," he cried, "and I shall propose in my own house a toast to the Tsar!"

Was the war over between the autocrat and the intelligentsia? Would they go forward now, hand in hand, and create a happy Russia?



CHAPTER XVI

THE INTELLIGENTSIA STRIKES BACK

THE FIGHT WAS not by any means over; indeed, it increased in intensity, on both sides, for the rest of the century and beyond.

The intelligentsia, both in Russia and abroad, and the students, eagerly watching the results of the reforms, soon saw that the Emperor had granted what he thought necessary to grant, but was still the autocrat who gave with one hand and took away with the other. Trial by jury was much better than the old system of bribery, but men and women could still be arrested and exiled with no trial at all. The zemstvos did excellent work in the provinces among the people, but they were never allowed to make laws or to take any part in government; they were welfare agencies.

They saw, too, that the peasants, especially those on the meager soil of Great Russia, were not much better off than they were before emancipation, except that they were no man's slaves. The allotments were small; they had often less land than they had cultivated as serfs, and forty-nine years seemed a long time to

have to pay for it, in addition to taxes. The payments were not always in proportion to the value of the land redeemed: sometimes the members of a commune had to pay more to the state than they could sell their whole crop for. Besides, when they were serfs, they had been allowed to use the landlord's pasture and woodland; now they had only their eight or ten acres and had to rent pasture and woodland. This was a great hardship and often resulted in the loss of the few animals on which their lives depended.

The peasant still belonged to the commune and could not leave it without the consent of the head of his household and the mir. The old equality of the commune itself was broken, because the clever or hard-working peasants leased or bought land and became prosperous, while the less clever or fortunate became so poor that they gave up their land and became hired laborers. Power and wealth are great temptations: some of the richer peasants lent money at ruinously high interest to the poorer ones or took over their share of land and gradually became nearly as oppressive as the landlords. These men were called "mir eaters" or "kulaks," which means fists. Still others, who lived on better land, prospered, built good houses and farmed more and more land, honestly and intelligently. Only a few years after emancipation they began to form cooperative societies, which later spread all over the country and had millions of members; another evidence of their extraordinary gift for cooperation, wherever it is allowed freedom. Within twenty years, the peasants held twice as much land as they had held in 1861. But they still paid fifteen sixteenths of all the taxes and nearly one half of their hard-earned income went to the government.

These injustices were harder to bear because the peasants were deeply disappointed by the terms of their emancipation. They had expected to have all the landlord's estate given to them, for they thought he had no right to it at all, since he never worked it; they certainly never expected to pay for a small part of it. They could not get it out of their heads that the land was like

air or water and belonged to him who used it. There were uprisings, which were put down by the soldiers; in one place over a hundred peasants were killed or wounded.

In Kazan University a group of students held a memorial service for those peasants and were, of course, expelled, some being sent to the army. No one felt the wrongs of the peasants more keenly than the students, who felt that they owed their education to the people who paid most of the taxes which supported the universities. The more generous of them were repelled by the idea of living as their families lived, idle, while other men worked for them. Again and again students, meeting in the public squares, protested against the acts of the government, until they were forced off by the soldiers who beat them with the butt ends of their rifles or with Cossack whips. The students were watched by the police as if they were the agents of foreign enemies; they were forbidden to meet or to form any clubs or societies; if two or three of them walked home together they were suspected.

After one of the disturbances in the universities Alexander Herzen's *Bell* rang out from London, "Go to the People! O exiles of knowledge, soldiers of the Russian People: this is your place!" Others of the older men who were living abroad urged the same thing, arguing that it was useless to appeal to the government; that the people themselves must be taught to demand their rights; that they must be educated until they were able to better their condition. The movement — To the People — spread over the country. In the 1870's hundreds and then two or three thousand young men and women, leaving their homes, often breaking with their families, suffering want and hunger, went into the villages, into lumber camps and fishing artels, among the bargemen or into the terrible slums of the cities, to teach the people and to learn about their lives. They worked in the fields and in the factories for twelve and fourteen hours a day, talking and working with their fellow laborers.

Their courage was splendid and their sacrifice great, but the

results were disappointing. The gap between classes was still unbridgeable. The peasants were suspicious of these strangers and the students' talk was often above their heads. Besides, in the villages and factories, the students were easily spotted by the police and were, indeed, often pointed out by the very people they were trying to help. They were no match for their enemies: the Emperor's police, his spies and his army.

One after another, these devoted young people were caught and thrown into prison. In 1878 one hundred and ninety-three of them were tried, after they had been kept for four years in prison. During that time seventy-three others had either died, killed themselves or gone insane; for prison usually meant solitary confinement in the dark, damp cells of the Peter and Paul or Schlüsselburg fortresses, where even their guards were forbidden to speak to the prisoners and they had no books or any means of turning their minds from their grievances. At the trial the ring-leaders were sent to hard labor in Siberia and the rest to exile. Hundreds more were imprisoned, tried and exiled.

Siberia had become more terrible since the days of the Decembrists who, as nobles, were at least taken by carriage or sleigh to their destination. Exiles now walked the three or four or five thousand miles, through summer heat and winter snow, over the great sorrowful road that led into Siberia; they were dressed, like common criminals, in rough gray clothes marked with the diamond-shaped yellow patch of the convict. They slept at stations about fifteen miles apart: wooden barracks, crowded to suffocation, whose only beds were sloping platforms, filthy and vermin-ridden, with no bedding at all, in winter or summer. The end of the journey might be a village in Yakutia where the gently bred prisoner lodged in the felt tent of people who lived as animals; or it might be prison or laboring all day in one of the terrible mines whose depths were always frozen. Political prisoners sometimes went on hunger strikes to force their captors to give them at least the privileges that murderers and highwaymen were allowed.

The cruel injustices of these punishments, inflicted on harmless men and women whose only desire was to help and educate others, did not end the battle. It only embittered the youth that stepped forward to take the place of the fallen. "We failed because we only talked," they said grimly. "Now let us act!" A party was formed called "The People's Will"; on its secret printing presses leaflets were printed, handed about, slipped under doors, mailed to high officials, threatening them with death if they persisted in their persecution of the people. The members of the party were widely scattered and it was hard for them to meet; therefore an Executive Committee planned the work.

In 1878 a girl shot the chief of police in St. Petersburg, because he had ordered a prisoner flogged for not taking off his hat. A few months later another police chief was stabbed on the street in the same city. The Governor of Kharkov, a colonel of police in Odessa and another at Archangel were murdered.

Political crimes were now handed over to military courts; spies, police, the searching of houses, arrests and imprisonments increased. A favorite trick of the police was to pretend to join the revolutionists and win their confidence; then they would encourage deeds of violence in order to betray those who took part in them. Men who did this work were called "agents provocateurs"; when they were good actors they were responsible for many arrests.

The young members of "The People's Will" lived a deadly game of hide-and-seek. They had a carefully organized system of printing and circulating revolutionary pamphlets, hiding their comrades, making false passports (for everyone must have a passport even to go from one Russian city to another), carrying out escapes, making bombs and obtaining weapons. Their lives were completely dedicated to their purpose and they lived in constant and terrible danger. Hanging was the penalty for taking part in an assassination; life imprisonment in the solitary confinement that was worse than any death, or a lifetime of hard

and hopeless labor awaited them, if they were caught in any act of terror.

At the end of the year 1879 a mine was exploded under the Emperor's train as he returned from Crimea, but he was not in the car that was destroyed. A few days later his death sentence was published by the Executive Committee of "The People's Will" and circulated by them. A few months later the dining room in the Winter Palace was blown to pieces by a bomb, but the Emperor was late to dinner and escaped. But he was frightened. The leaders of the zemstvos had been pleading for a national assembly. The Emperor had no intention of granting any such request; he was persuaded, however, by these events, to allow the zemstvos to send delegates to consult with his ministers about possible improvements in the government.

On the very day that he promised the zemstvos this small right, March 1st, 1881, as he was driving along the Catherine Canal, a bomb was thrown at his carriage. The signal to the bomb-thrower was given by a young and pretty girl. It wounded some of his escort and the Emperor got out of the carriage to see to them. "Are you hurt, Sire?" cried one of his officers. "No, thank God," he answered. "It is too soon to thank God," said a voice, and a young man flung another bomb between himself and the Emperor, killing them both.

Alexander II performed his imperial duty, as all the Romanovs did, in adding territory to his empire.

Shamyl, the heroic leader of the Caucasian mountaineers who had resisted the Russian conquest for twenty-five years, surrendered in 1859. The Caucasus, rich in minerals and in oil, as far south as the Aras River, was now Russian. The Russians were wise in their eastern victories: they always, even in Tartar days, honored their conquered enemies, letting them keep their titles and their positions, thereby winning their gratitude and loyalty. Shamyl, tall and splendid to look at, was pleased to be embraced

by the Emperor in the brilliant court of St. Petersburg; but when he saw the Russian ladies with their bare arms and shoulders and uncovered heads he turned and fled from the room. He was a Moslem and Moslem ladies veiled themselves from head to foot if they had to appear in public.

Turkestan, too, between the Caspian Sea and the western border of China, a vast area of dry steppe and desert, was added to Russia, after about twenty years of warfare. There had once been prosperous Turkish empires there, when the caravan route from China ran through the old trading cities of Bokhara, Samarkand and Tashkent; but the land, in the very heart of the continent, had dried gradually and become desert; it had been fought over by Turks and Tartars and was now poor, although it could be redeemed by irrigation. Russia's southern boundaries now reached to Afghanistan and Persia. There were no uncertain frontiers left.

In far-eastern Siberia a great Governor General, Muraviov, won by a peaceful treaty with China, in 1858, the whole northern bank of the Amur River. A few years later he claimed for Russia the precious territory between the Ussuri River, which runs into the Amur, and the Sea of Japan.* On the southernmost part of this coast a fort and a few houses were raised and given the significant name of Vladivostok — Ruler of the East. This was farther south than any other seaport Russia possessed and it had access to the Pacific Ocean. Muraviov, five thousand miles from his Emperor, did all this on his own initiative and was richly rewarded for it. After a spectacularly adventurous and successful life on the edge of the world, he spent his last years enjoying himself in Paris.

In the south, Alexander tried to redeem the disgrace of the Crimean War. While Europe was busy with new worries, in 1871, he announced that Russia's warships would sail on the Black Sea and that Sevastopol would be a naval arsenal again. In 1877 he made war on Turkey in order to regain his right to

* See map, page 391.

protect the Christians there and especially in the Balkan Peninsula, where one country after another was winning its independence from the Turks and driving them out of Europe. Russia won the war, but the nations of western Europe insisted on having a part in the peace treaty, showing Russia that they were still not willing to have it take the place of Turkey or move too near Constantinople.

In 1871 a new and considerable weight was thrown into the Balance of Power. The German states, under the leadership of Prussia, united and became the German Empire. They proved their new nationhood, after the manner of nations, by a victorious war against Austria and another against France.

Vladimir Ilyich Studies Marx

AFTER ALEXANDER II was assassinated in 1881, the Executive Committee of the Terrorists, as the members of "The People's Will" were now called, sent an open letter to his son, Alexander III. Only a few sentences of it can be quoted here.

"Your Majesty," the letter said, "the bloody tragedy on the Catherine Canal was no chance occurrence and could have surprised no one. After what has happened during the last ten years it seemed inevitable; and therein lies its profound meaning, which should be understood by him whom destiny has placed at the head of the state.

"During an entire decade, in spite of the sternest persecution . . . the revolutionary movement continued to increase; the best forces of the country, the most energetic men in Russia, came forward to swell its ranks. The rigors of the government after 1878 and 1879 gave birth to the Terrorists. For three whole years the desperate war has lasted between them and the government.

"Your Majesty will admit that the government cannot be accused of want of energy. The innocent and the guilty were hanged alike; the prisons and the remotest provinces were filled with the condemned. The so-called leaders were taken and

hanged by the dozen. They died with the calmness of martyrs but this did not stop the movement. . . . An entire nation cannot be suppressed.

"We can easily foresee what will be the future of the movement if the policy of the government does not change . . . a terrible explosion, a bloody revolution will complete the destruction of the old order of things. There are only two outlets to such a situation: either a revolution or the spontaneous surrender of authority to the people to share in the work of government.

"The Executive Committee counsels you to choose the latter course. The Executive Committee will then suspend its own activities, and the forces that it has organized will disband and devote themselves to the fruitful work of civilization, culture and the welfare of the people."

The letter ended by demanding two things: first, freedom for all political prisoners "since they have committed no crime but have simply done their duty as citizens"; second, the assembling of representatives of the whole of the people to decide on "the best forms of social and political life." In order to elect these representatives, there must be granted freedom of the press and speech and public meeting. "And now, Your Majesty, decide. The choice rests with you."

Alexander III paid no attention to the letter or to other wise and dignified appeals from the zemstvos. He decided, nonetheless, as all the Romanovs did, not to allow the people any share in the government and that Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Nationality were the only salvation of Russia. Persecution and censorship were increased and were extended to all the different nationalities under Russian rule, many of which had hitherto enjoyed a great deal of local freedom. Poles, Finns, Tartars and Turks were now ruled by Russians and forced, officially, to speak Russian and to be as Russian as possible, while the Jews were cruelly persecuted.

In 1886 the Emperor's train was thrown off the rails by a bomb, but he was not hurt. Several young men were caught and

hanged, among them one named Alexander Ulianov, who was twenty-one years old.

Young Ulianov came from Simbirsk, a town built on a cliff above the Volga, nearly a thousand miles from St. Petersburg. His father was an inspector of schools, who did his best to found and keep up decent schools for children all around Simbirsk. His mother was descended from Germans who had settled along the Volga; he had three sisters and two brothers. The children had grown up very happily, for they were all clever and congenial; they loved science and music and books and cared very much about what was going on in Russia. All six children became revolutionists. Alexander and his oldest sister had gone to the university in St. Petersburg. He did not tell his family that he had joined "The People's Will"; his arrest and death were a terrible shock to them.

His brother Vladimir, four years younger than he, had been his close companion. Vladimir was now ready for the university but the police did not want him in St. Petersburg, so he entered the university in the old Tartar city of Kazan on the Volga. Soon after he arrived there a student disturbance broke out, as a protest against government injustice and restriction. He attended a meeting of the students and, that very evening, was arrested and expelled. The police had its eye on Alexander Ulianov's brother.

He lived first near Kazan and then on a small estate belonging to his mother's family (his father had died before Alexander) and, since he could not go on with his work at the university, he studied whatever interested him. At that time most of the intelligentsia were reading the books of Karl Marx, the most important of which, *Capital*, had been translated into Russian some years before. Vladimir Ulianov gave his brilliant mind to the study of Marx.

When Peter the Great went into western Europe he found that the nations there were far ahead of Russia in many ways and he worked frantically to pull his country into line with the others.

In the nineteenth century, too, great things had happened in the West, both in deeds and in thought, and again Russians found, ready-made, as it were, the things they needed to help their own growth.

In western Europe, during the nineteenth century, the industrial revolution was taking place: that is, machinery, driven by steam-power, had been invented and this invention was changing the course of history all over the world.

The greatest change was that the work which countless men did with their hands in their own workshops was done instead by machines in factories. Weaving, for instance, which was done before this time on hand looms, was now done far more cheaply and quickly by machinery. The hand weaver could no longer sell his cloth. What was he to do? He must leave his home and his loom, go to a factory and ask to tend a machine which did not belong to him; he must accept any wage that was offered him or else starve, with his family; for the factory and machinery belonged to their owner who could find plenty of other men to tend them.

When machinery was first invented, factory owners, knowing these things, paid miserable wages, just enough to keep their workers alive, and made men, women, and children as young as six years old, work for fourteen and sixteen hours a day. Their lives were unspeakably wretched but there was nothing else they could do. They formed a class known as the proletariat: that is, people who own no property at all and are paid a wage by those who do own property.

Meanwhile the men who employed them became immensely rich by selling the goods turned out by the men at the machines. They made more money than they could spend and used it to build more factories, more railroads, more steamboats, and to invent more machines until the complicated activity that we call capitalism, or big business, spread all over the world.

The injustice and misery, greater than that of serfdom, caused by these events, roused the indignation of many generous-hearted

men and made them try to find a way to cure them. The socialists, whose writings had attracted Herzen and many other Russians, believed that no man had the right to own the means of production: that is, the machines, the mines, the forests, the land — the things that, taken together, provide the necessities of life. They believed that those things should be owned by all the people and run by the government, not for profit but for the use of the people; that everyone should work and be paid for his work and that the products should be divided among the people according to their needs.

Many people, among them the Russian intelligentsia, believed that socialism was the best way to live, but how could it be brought about? Power was in the hands of the governments and governments were run by capitalists, who would use it to protect their interests. Karl Marx and his friend Friedrich Engels, two German philosophers, devoted their lives to finding a way of establishing socialism in the world. They found a way and wrote books about it; they also became the leaders of a German proletarian party called the Communist League and later of an International Workingman's Association, for they were impatient of theory and wanted action. "Hitherto philosophers have only interpreted the world," said Marx. "The thing is, to change it."

Philosophers at that time were trying to find some cause and reason in history: did things just happen or were they the results of some cause? If so, what cause or causes? Was history a science? Marx, too, studied this question deeply, and found an answer.

He said that everything that happened in human life was caused primarily by the way men earn their living: all civilizations, the rise and fall of empires, the arts, sciences and religions, all depend upon the ways men find, in different times and places, of using the resources of the earth to make themselves comfortable. A good example of his theory might be the Tartars who, living on arid soil, kept flocks, which made them lead a wandering, uncivilized life; when they wanted more than a

bare living they robbed and conquered their neighbors who, living on fertile river land, farmed it and laid up wealth and developed the arts.

As soon as men became civilized, Marx said, they exploited other men who were weaker than they; that is, they made other men work for them for little or no return. First there was slavery, then serfdom, then the wage-labor of the proletariat. This led to the division of classes—the ruling class and the working class—and it led also to government, for Marx believed that the only purpose of government was to enable one class of men to oppress and exploit another class by force. The struggle of the exploited classes against the exploiters is the force that leads to growth and change. “The history of all hitherto existing society,” said he, in a manifesto written for the Communist League, “is the history of class struggles.”

As long as the ruling class increases the production and well-being of a country, it remains in power, but if it grows lazy and greedy and holds back the good things of life, it will be overthrown. The feudal lords of Europe, for example, were once useful to the people; when they were no longer useful, they were overthrown by the middle class of merchants and manufacturers who had grown up, in the towns, between the nobles and the serfs.

This middle class is known as the “bourgeoisie”; its members are called “bourgeois,” from the French word meaning townspeople. It was they who made the revolutions of 1647 and 1688 in England, which gave the ruling power to Parliament instead of the King; they made the Revolution of 1776 in America and set up a democratic republic; they made the French Revolution of 1789. They won freedom and wealth for themselves; they developed science and invented machinery. They became the ruling class, the capitalists. And in their turn, as we have seen, they exploited the class below them, the proletariat.

Marx believed that the bourgeois, by the middle of the nineteenth century, had also outlived their usefulness. For, he said,

the capitalists were making the majority of the people so poor that soon, instead of being supported by the labor of the proletariat, the capitalists would have to feed and support their own starving workers. Besides, by bringing them together in great numbers in factories and industrial cities, they were making it possible for the proletariat to combine and rebel against them. "What the bourgeoisie produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers," he wrote. "Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable."

Just as the bourgeois overthrew the feudal lord, therefore, the proletarian must overthrow the bourgeois capitalist. And, as the former change had been brought about by revolution, so must this be done by revolution, for no class willingly gives up its wealth and power.

When the proletariat won its revolution, it must set up — not a democracy, for democracy is a product of the bourgeoisie — but a dictatorship which will enable it to transform society from capitalism into socialism.

Under socialism there would be no more classes, for there would be no class left to be oppressed; there would finally be no more need of government, since government was only a means of oppression. No man would be exploited by any other and no nation would be exploited by any other; there would be no cause for wars. Socialism would solve every human problem.

Young Vladimir Ilyich Ulianov read everything of Marx's that he could lay his hands on. He joined a secret Marxist society and discussed this exciting new theory with his friends and his sisters and younger brother. He was convinced that here was the truth, the solution of Russia's troubles, as well as those of all humanity. The young students who had gone "to the people" had failed; his brother Alexander and all the Terrorists had given their lives in vain, for when they killed one emperor they only got a worse one in his place. Here, at last, was a plan; here was a science whose laws could be relied on. Looking out over the steppe, or over the wide, slow Volga, where bands of boatmen

towed the heavy barges upstream, Vladimir knew where his road lay and who would be his guide. Marx's theories took complete possession of him and he became their very embodiment.

1905

AFTER A year or two, Vladimir's mother, counting on the devoted work of her husband, appealed to the Minister of Education and got permission for her son to take the final examinations at the law school in St. Petersburg, although he was not allowed to study there. In a year and a half, studying by himself, he finished the four-year course and passed first in the examination. After spending two more years in Samara, practising law, he went to St. Petersburg, in 1893. He was twenty-three years old; a short, stocky, young man with a high, massive head already getting bald, like his father's; with small, keen eyes and high cheekbones, a generous mouth and strong chin. He immediately joined a group of Marxists in the city, who were working, underground of course, with the workmen in the factories. He organized a society called "The League of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class."

Russia had a smaller proletariat in proportion to its population than the other powerful European countries, for the majority of the people were still farmers scattered thinly over the vast land. But, since the freeing of the serfs, industry had grown enormously. Many peasants left the ungrateful northern soil, many were sent by their communes to earn money in the factories; many house serfs, freed without land, became proletarians. Their life was bitterly hard: they worked for twelve and fourteen hours a day for wretched wages and lived — a whole family, often several families, in one room — in the cities' slums, or in crowded, dirty barracks provided by the factories. Sometimes there was no place to sleep: the tired men lay down on benches or on the floor of their workroom. Moscow was a great textile center; St. Petersburg was famous for its metal works; mining was developed in

the Urals and the Donets basin; thousands of miles of railroads were built, including the Trans-Siberian, the longest in the world, connecting European Russia with its Pacific port, Vladivostok. Workers were needed in all these places.

In St. Petersburg, groups of Marxists were busy teaching the workmen to read and write, teaching them, too, the philosophy of Marx, telling them that the salvation of their country and the world depended on them, that their "historic role" was to overthrow capitalism. It was far easier to reach the workmen than to reach the peasants, for they were all together in one place, as Marx had pointed out. They could listen and talk together; they could read the underground papers, and they were eager for knowledge. The books of Marx and Engels, though they are often hard to understand, were torn to pieces so that they could be passed around more easily and read more quickly. Pamphlets and magazines were smuggled in from abroad and circulated until they were worn to shreds.

There was now an efficient underground army of revolutionists: some were printers, some propagandists, some smuggled literature in from abroad in the bindings of other books, in double-sided trunks and bags. They wrote to each other in code, in invisible ink or even in milk, which became visible when the paper was heated. They took harmless books and marked certain letters with a tiny dot: in this way they could write long letters to each other unknown to the police. Besides the active revolutionists, there were thousands of people, living perfectly "respectable" lives, who helped the revolutionists: gave them lodging, hid things for them, let them use an address for mailing purposes.

Vladimir Ulianov learned all the underground ways and became very clever at using them. He soon had no time for the law, but gave his whole mind to revolution. In 1895 he went abroad to visit a group of Russian Marxists who were in exile, and to see how things were going there. For Marxists were, above all things, internationalists; they were working for a class, not a

country; for the overthrow of capitalism in the whole world. Ulianov and the Marxists abroad decided there must be a workers' newspaper, and he returned to Russia to start it.

He and a few others, among them a girl, Nadezhda Krupskaya, got the paper printed and were ready to circulate the first copy. That very day the police found them out and most of the group, including Ulianov, were thrown into prison. After fourteen months in prison, he was exiled for three years to Siberia.

He was not plunged into despair at this event, as the intelligentsia used to be, for Marx had taught him that revolution was a long, hard road, and that no social change was made without violence and bloodshed. Prison and exile were merely a part of the process. Marxists, actually, were not treated badly by the government: they were considered harmless theorists and, since they did not believe in assassination, they were even encouraged. Ulianov was allowed to read and to write in prison; he kept fit by exercising in his small cell and he began to write one of his most important books, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*.

He was exiled to the village of Shushenskoye, in eastern Siberia, where he lived in a clean peasant cabin, and walked and swam in the summer, skated and hunted in the winter. The girl with whom he had worked — Krupskaya, as she is always called — was exiled a year after he was; she asked to be sent to Shushenskoye, saying that she was engaged to him. They were married shortly after she arrived and worked together on his book, as they worked together all the rest of his life. In Siberia he took the name of Lenin, for every revolutionist used an assumed, or "conspiratorial" name, and often many different names. He was freed in 1900, four and a half years after his arrest.

Revolutionists had a hard choice to make: either they must live abroad, far from all they cared most about, or they must, at home, be in constant danger of having their work stopped by arrest and exile. Lenin chose to go abroad. He joined the Marxists whom he had visited five years before and they began to publish

the newspaper that had been nipped in the bud in Russia. It was called *Iskra*, the *Spark*, from a line sent to Pushkin by one of the Decembrists, "Out of the spark will come the flame." The paper was smuggled wholesale into Russia, where it was read in factories, in the army and in the cities. It became the guide of the Marxian socialists.

Much had happened during Lenin's absence. The different groups of Marxian socialists had formed a party called the Social Democrats. There were other parties, too; for the intelligentsia, reinforced now by thousands of peasants and workmen whom they had taught, had grown enormously since the days of the Decembrists. There were the Social Revolutionaries, who were the heirs of the People's Will; they believed in terror, sought the support of the peasants rather than the proletariat and wanted a socialist democracy in which all classes of society should share. There were also many Liberals, among them members of the *zemstvos*. These men still hoped for a constitutional monarchy which would in time grant all the needed reforms. They formed a party called the Constitutional Democrats who were known, from the initials of the two words, as Kadets. There were many different opinions as to what must be done. Even the Marxists disagreed with one another.

Lenin set himself to the task of putting into action the words of Marx, for he believed them to be the truth and would listen to nothing else. The Social Democratic Party met in 1903 in London. Lenin held that the party must be made up of men completely devoted to Marxism and to the revolution, "professional revolutionists," disciplined like soldiers, who could lead the proletariat to power. The proletariat alone, he said, would never achieve socialism; they would yield to the bourgeoisie. Their leaders, therefore, must be strong and united; they must work in the party organization, not just talk. Lenin hated talkers and was not one himself. "Better that ten workers should not be members of the party," he said, "than that one talker should have the right to be a member." Other Social Democrats believed that everyone

whose aims were the same as theirs, anyone who even sympathized with them, should be allowed to join.

The party split into two factions on this question. Lenin lost his point by a small minority but he won another point by an equally small majority. Because of this latter vote he and his followers were known as Bolsheviks — from the word *bolshinstvo*, meaning majority — while the others were called Mensheviks, from *menshinstvo*, meaning minority.

Shortly afterward some of Lenin's followers left him to join the Mensheviks. He found himself in a very small minority — although the two groups kept their original names — and resigned from *Iskra*. He never wavered in his opinion, however. He was absolutely sure that socialism could be established only as Marx stated: that capitalism must be overthrown by violence and that the proletariat must then take over the government and set up a dictatorship. This meant the organizing of a powerful and ruthless revolutionary force. He knew what this meant and to this purpose he devoted the whole of his powerful mind and will.

One of the Menshevik leaders, when asked how Lenin had become so important a leader, said of him, "There is no other man who is absorbed by the revolution twenty-four hours a day, who has no other thought but the revolution, who even when he sleeps dreams of nothing but the revolution."

This split in the Social Democratic Party was very confusing and disheartening to the workmen and the Social Democrats in Russia. But history now played into the hands of the revolutionists.

At this time — the first years of the twentieth century — the conquests and the influence of the European nations had spread all over the earth, and the Balance of Power was not forgotten in their ever-increasing territory. Only North and South America were free of it. Almost all of Africa and a large part of Asia were divided into European colonies, while the other Asiatic countries, because they did not know the use of machinery and modern

weapons, were at the mercy of Europe. There was just one exception — Japan. In the latter half of the nineteenth century the Japanese had found out what was going on around them, and in one generation they had mastered all the techniques of modern industry, built a powerful army and navy, and taken their place among the "Powers" of the world. It was an amazing feat, which Peter the Great would have admired.

The Japanese were, by nature, a warlike people but they had not, for centuries, troubled anyone outside their own islands. They saw now, however, that Russia was established in Vladivostok, across a narrow sea from their own islands, and that the western European nations were taking one seaport after another in China, which had refused, so far, to imitate Europe and to modernize itself. Russia, which had never stopped expanding since the reign of Ivan Kalita, was looking hopefully now at the rich land of Manchuria, which belonged to China, and at Korea, which was still closer to Japan. There, at last, it might have seaports whose harbors would not be frozen over every winter.

But the Japanese did not intend to let the Western Powers do as they liked in China or to have Russia take Manchuria and Korea. If anyone were to take those rich lands from China, they would do so. In 1894 they tried out their new army and navy on China and won an easy victory. Then, in February, 1904, they made war, suddenly and without warning, on Russia; and this war, too, after a year and a half of fighting, ended in their victory. Russia was defeated on land and on sea; Japan took a part of Manchuria and, a few years later, the whole of Korea as well.

These results of the Japanese War, however, like those of the Crimean War, were not so serious as the results inside Russia.

No one in Russia liked the war with Japan. In the summer of 1904 a Social Revolutionary killed the Minister of the Interior. The Emperor appointed a Liberal in his place and hope revived. The zemstvos, in a conference of all their elected heads, asked again for freedom of speech and conscience and for a national

assembly. At the end of that year the professional men — doctors, lawyers, professors, writers — formed a union and supported the zemstvos. But the autocracy, which gave only when its hand was forced open, paid no attention. Nicholas II, who had come to the throne in 1894, told the delegates of the zemstvos that their request was “a senseless dream.”

He was a weak, amiable man, handsome, like all the Romanovs since Alexander I; he loved his wife, the German Princess Alix of Hesse, and his five children, and was happiest living a quiet life in the country with them. If proof was needed that autocracy had outlived its usefulness, Nicholas was that proof.

In January, 1905, the working people of St. Petersburg planned to present a petition to the Emperor. Their lives were becoming unbearable. They received an average wage of about a hundred and twenty-five dollars a year and prices of food had risen sharply because of the war. In 1897 the working day had been limited to eleven and a half hours. They had no rights: their starvation wages were often cut by fines inflicted for various reasons; their jobs might be lost at any moment; they were not allowed to have unions. So as a last resort they came to their “Little Father,” the Tsar. “Sire,” their petition said, “we, the workingmen of St. Petersburg, our wives, children and old, helpless parents come to you to ask for truth and protection. We have grown to be paupers, we are oppressed, we are overburdened with work, we are abused, we are treated like slaves compelled to suffer silently their bitter lot. We are at the end of our strength, Sire. . . .” They ended by asking for an eight-hour day, freedom for political prisoners, a national assembly, and a constitution.

On the 9th of January, a Sunday, one or two hundred thousand of them marched in an orderly procession, led by a priest, to the Winter Palace to present this plea. They carried icons and banners and sang as they went. They found the palace guarded by lines of troops, who let them assemble in the big square. When the square was filled, a bugle sounded and the soldiers opened fire. Hundreds of workmen or their wives and children fell

dead or wounded; the rest fled or fell, in their fury, on the soldiers and police. The Emperor was not even in his palace. It was the last time the workmen ever expected anything from him. The occasion was called "Bloody Sunday," and it was not forgotten.

As soon as the news of it spread over the country, strikes broke out: factories, shops, schools and universities closed, one after another. In February the Emperor's uncle, the Grand Duke Sergius, Governor of Moscow, was killed by a bomb. The young Social Revolutionary who did it faced his judges fearlessly. "Learn to look the revolution straight in the eye," he told them.

In May the Russian fleet was destroyed in the Strait of Tsushima by the Japanese. In May also, in the industrial town of Ivanovo, the workmen formed what they called a soviet, or council, made up of their representatives, one for so many hundred workmen. It was another example of the tendency to organization and democracy so natural to the Russians, in a new field this time — the factory. It was a more important event than the defeat at Tsushima, but few people realized it.

In June a delegation from the zemstvos waited on the Emperor. To their surprise, he promised to call a national assembly. In August he published a decree announcing that an Imperial Duma (another word meaning council), based on popular representation, would be elected. Ten days later, the war with Japan ended.

As with everything the Emperor granted, there was a string attached to the Duma. Peasants and landowners were to be represented, but in the cities only people who owned a certain amount of property; students, teachers and workmen would not be represented at all. And, at all events, the Duma would not make laws but would only suggest them and consult with the Emperor's ministers. In other words, it would have no power at all.

When the people realized this, there was bitter disappointment. The strikes increased, although striking meant starving to most workmen. Soviets were formed in a dozen other cities to

organize the strikes; then in Moscow and St. Petersburg, where there were hundreds of thousands of workmen. In St. Petersburg, a brilliant young man, whose revolutionary name was Trotsky, led the soviet; he had worked with Lenin on *Iskra*, but went with the Mensheviks in 1903. In September the unrest grew into a general strike. Printers, bakers, textile workers and, finally, the railroad and telegraph workers struck. The country was paralyzed. The peasants also rose up, burning, destroying, crying, "All the land to those that work it!"

Even the navy revolted. That same summer of 1905 the crew of a warship of the Black Sea fleet, the *Potemkin*, mutinied, killed most of its officers and sailed off with the ship. At Kronstadt there was another mutiny.

By these violent means, another concession was wrung from the unwilling hand of the Emperor. At the end of October another decree promised greater freedom of speech and conscience, a wider representation for the Duma and its right to pass on all laws.

By the end of the year strikes and mutinies died down, repressed by the army and police or weakened by the hunger of the strikers. In December the St. Petersburg Soviet was arrested; at the end of December an armed uprising in Moscow was put down by soldiers. But the autocracy had a bad shock and the rebels had renewed confidence in their own power. Some people call 1905 the first Russian Revolution; others call it a dress rehearsal, without which the second could not have happened. It shook Russia to its depths.

The first Nicholas faced one hundred and twenty-one defiant young men. The second Nicholas faced an aroused and enraged people.



CHAPTER XVII

REVOLUTION

February, 1917

THE DUMA DID not accomplish all that had been so ardently hoped for. As soon as the strikes were over, the Emperor and his ministers tried, as usual, to take back as much as possible of what they had unwillingly granted. They kept everything they could out of the Duma's hands: laws already passed, the Emperor's decrees, the army and navy and foreign affairs. Nevertheless, the first Duma met in May, 1906, in the great Tauride Palace that Catherine had built for Potemkin.

The great majority of its members belonged to the Kadet Party and came from the zemstvos and other liberal groups; the Social Democrats had taken little part in the elections as they hoped for nothing from the Duma. When the delegates met and were free to speak, they demanded that the ministers of the government be chosen by the majority party in the Duma, and not by the Emperor; that the Duma have the sole power to make

laws; that the great estates be broken up and given to the peasants; that all the nationalities in Russia have equal rights; that the death penalty be abolished, amnesty granted to all political prisoners and free education given to everyone.

This program, as can be imagined, was a blow to Nicholas and his ministers. Their cold reply was that nearly everything the Duma asked for was impossible. The delegates protested against this reply; and on July 21st, without even so much as informing the Duma itself, a notice was posted in the streets that it was dissolved, that is, sent home, and that a new Duma would be called the next year.

The government did everything it could to make the elections to the next Duma difficult and to have more docile members chosen. There were more supporters of the government chosen in the second Duma but there were also more revolutionists, both Social Revolutionaries and Social Democrats, the latter mostly Mensheviks. The results were no better. The second Duma met in March and was dissolved in June. Thirty-one Social Democrats, accused of treason, were exiled to Siberia.

After that, the government frankly changed the electoral laws so that only delegates acceptable to it would be elected. This meant breaking the law they themselves had made, which stated plainly that the electoral law could not be changed without the consent of the Duma. As a result, the third Duma, which met in November, 1907, was made up almost entirely of the small upper class of gentry and nobility, with fifty-four Kadets and twenty Social Democrats. This Duma pleased the Emperor and was allowed to finish its five-year term. It was a little better than no Duma at all; it had, at least, a weak voice with which to criticize the government, but that was all.

In order to quiet the peasants, the government decreed that the communal land could be divided among them and held as their personal property. This was done all over the country and was a very good thing for the peasants, many of whom now had a far more tolerable life; but it was not what they wanted most. They

wanted, insistently and stubbornly, *more* land to cultivate, enough for them all to live on.

The failure of the Dumas, which had been the main result of the strikes, was very discouraging to the workmen, who had suffered severely; to the peasants, who had worked hard to elect men who could speak for them; and to all revolutionists and liberals.

Lenin and his wife had gone to Switzerland, arriving in Geneva in January, 1908, when it was cold and cheerless. On their first evening there, in a rare mood of depression, he said to her, "I feel just as if I'd come here to be buried." But soon he was at his usual tireless work of writing, exhorting, holding his own party to strict discipline of thought and action. "Remember," he wrote to his followers, "the day of the mass struggle is approaching. It will be armed uprising . . . an armed, bloody and merciless struggle." In 1912 the Bolshevik Party broke finally with the rest of the Social Democrats and held its own independent meetings and congresses. It also published its own newspaper, *Pravda* or *Truth*. It was Lenin's party.

History again played into the hands of revolution, as Marx had said it would. Lenin himself believed, as he wrote later in one of his most important books, that imperialism was the highest and the last stage of capitalism. He meant by this that the capitalist nations, because they needed raw materials for their industries and also great markets where they could sell their manufactured goods, would conquer more and more of the weaker nations of the world and, in the course of these conquests, would fight each other in greater and greater wars.

This very thing happened. Germany, an ambitious and vigorous young country, had become a nation only in 1871, when most of the world had been conquered by the older European nations. It wanted what its leaders called "a place in the sun" — its share of empire. It played the game of the Balance of Power by making an alliance with the Austrian Empire and with Italy,

and with them it formed a solid block across the center of Europe. To offset this, Russia and France formed an alliance; and England, while not actually entering the alliance, was on their side. While it was hoped that these two groups would keep the precarious Balance of Power, it was understood that, in case of war, the members of each alliance would support one another.

In 1914 the First World War broke out between these powers. It started in the Balkans, between Austria and Serbia, one of the countries that had freed itself from Turkey. Russia supported Serbia, which was a Slavic nation; Germany supported Austria; and before the people of any country could realize what had happened, the two alliances were at war in the most terrible conflict that had ever been known, and most of the smaller nations were drawn in against their wills.

War was declared by Germany against Russia on August 1st, 1914; by the middle of August Russian armies had invaded East Prussia, the old battleground of the wars against the Teutonic Knights. Victorious at first, the Russians were disastrously beaten at Tannenberg, the very place where the Teutonic Knights had been defeated five hundred years before. Vast numbers of soldiers and pieces of artillery were captured and Russia could spare neither. There was not only Germany to fight: Austria, a large empire at that time, immediately invaded Russian Poland and in October Turkey joined the Central Powers, as Germany and Austria were called. Russia, France and England were known as the Allies. In 1915 the Russians were fighting from the Caucasus Mountains to the Baltic Sea. Before a year of war was over, they had lost nearly four million men — killed, wounded or taken prisoners.

At first the war had aroused great enthusiasm, far more than the Russo-Japanese War had aroused. Its first object had been to protect Serbia, a Slavic nation, against attack, and this was a Russian tradition. Besides, the Germans were obviously out to conquer everything they could lay their hands on and the war

against them seemed to be one of defense. But, as another summer and another winter went on, the feeling changed. There was not enough artillery, not enough ammunition; soldiers were sent into battle without arms and told to pick up those their dead comrades no longer needed. It was the old story of the Crimean and the Japanese wars, only on a far larger scale. The soldiers realized that they were being flung into the most horrible warfare, poorly equipped and poorly supported and that they were being needlessly sacrificed. Untrained men, young and old, were hastily set up before the deadly and efficient German guns. And, in spite of their deaths and their sufferings, they lost: Russian Poland was overrun by the Germans, Serbia by the Austrians; Bulgaria, which had won its freedom with Russia's help, joined the Central Powers.

Meanwhile the liberal, fine men in the Fourth Duma (elected for five years in 1912) and in the zemstvos, who still hoped for change and reform under the monarchy, were struggling with an impossible situation in the capital. The German name, St. Petersburg, had been changed to the Russian Petrograd, or Peter's City, out of patriotism. Nicholas II, incredibly blind and foolish, learned nothing and mismanaged everything. He appointed an aged Prime Minister who quarreled even with the present very conservative Duma, and an inefficient and lazy Minister of War. To the horror of his generals, the Emperor announced, in 1915, that he himself would take command of the army, replacing his far more able cousin, the Grand Duke Nicholas. He was, therefore, most of the time away from Petrograd, and his wife, a woman of strong will but narrow and fanatical mind, took his place there.

She was under the influence of an ignorant, drunken, debauched priest named Rasputin, who possessed certain occult powers of healing and clairvoyance. He had been able to cure her precious only son, the Tsarevich, when doctors despaired of his life, and the Empress thought him a holy man and referred to him as "Our Friend" or "He," always in capital letters. On

his advice she made the Emperor dismiss one of his liberal ministers after another because "he does not like our Friend"; until the President of the Duma wrote to the Emperor, "Your Majesty, there is not one reliable or honest man left round you. All the best men have either been dismissed or have refused to hold office." But the Empress was writing at the same time, "Do not obey the stupid Duma. Bring down your fist on the table! Be the boss! Obey your firm little wife and our Friend." * And the Emperor did. Surely Autocracy and Orthodoxy had never sunk so low!

In the second year of the war the Emperor, the Empress and a small clique of ministers stood completely alone, opposed by every class of their subjects, as they had been in 1905. The Duma, which the Empress did her best to silence, stormed against the abuses of the government. One of the great nobles, aided by a close relative of the Emperor's, murdered Rasputin, in December, 1916, and threw his body under the ice of the Neva. Nothing, however, shook the obstinacy of the imperial pair. How much longer could the deadlock last?

In the winter of 1917 bread ran short in Petrograd. Inefficiency in distributing it was the chief cause, rather than lack of food. In the icy winds and deep snow of February women stood for hours in lines at the doors of shops and got a meager ration, or nothing, after their long wait. On February 23rd the women of certain textile factories went on strike in the Vyborg district, a big industrial suburb across the Neva from the main part of the city. The women sent word to the men in the metal-working factories to join them. Ninety thousand men and women marched across the bridges into the squares and streets of Petrograd, demanding bread. They were not disorderly; meetings were held in the squares and men and women spoke about their grievances; crowds marched to the city council, shouting, "Bread!" In the evening they went home again.

* *Sic. She wrote in English.*

Double the number came out the next day. Cries of "Down with autocracy!" "Down with the war!" mingled with the cries for bread. Cossacks were called out to disperse the crowds. They shoved their horses against the workmen but the people were not afraid of them. "They won't shoot us," they said to each other. Women went up to the horsemen. "Brothers, Cossacks," they said, "you will not kill us, will you? You know that all we want is bread. Help us to get it!" Other troops were sent out and the workmen went fearlessly up to them. "Join us, comrades," they said. "Put down your rifles or give them to us."

A quarter of a million men and women were milling about the streets on the 25th, not only workmen: shops, schools and business houses closed; students, shopkeepers, clerks, householders came out into the streets. No one knew exactly what was happening; there was no leadership except from committees of workmen.

More troops were called out. On Sunday, the 26th, the bridges were closed between the industrial suburbs and the city, but the people swarmed across the river on the ice, that good friend of Russia. Troops and people filled the city, with almost no violence.

Early on Monday morning, the 27th, the Volhynski regiment disobeyed its officers and went over to the people. "A most strange sight occurred," said one of its officers later. "A whole regiment marched down the street in perfect order, its band playing, without a single officer!" They marched to other barracks, asking, "Are you for the people or against them?" Peter's old regiments of the Guard went over to the people. Trucks full of them drove through the streets and the crowds cheered them wildly. The soldiers gave their rifles to workmen and embraced and kissed them, laughing or weeping. Still with no leaders — for most of the leaders were abroad or in exile — the people and the soldiers together attacked and burned police stations, opened the prisons, took the dreaded Peter and Paul Fortress, across the ice, captured the arsenal and handed out weapons and ammunition. Red banners and pieces of red cloth — for red was the

color of the international revolution — appeared everywhere and revolutionary songs filled the air, mingled with cries of "Land! Bread! Freedom!" The people realized their victory: if the soldiers were on their side, who was there to fear? On the other hand, who was to lead them into a new life?

In the afternoon they marched to the Tauride Palace, where the Duma met, and offered it their allegiance and their protection. It was the only organization that they trusted at all. At the same time, some socialists, Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, remembered 1905 and sent out a call for a soviet. Immediately workmen and soldiers met together in every quarter and elected their delegates.

That very same evening, the 27th, the Duma set up a Provisional Committee, to plan some sort of government; and the Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies met: both in the Tauride Palace.

During these five days the Emperor was at army headquarters. On Sunday the President of the Duma telegraphed to him: "The situation is serious. There is anarchy in the streets. The government is paralyzed. It is necessary for someone whom the people trust to form a government. Delay means death!" The Tsar answered by an order adjourning the Duma until April! Next day the President sent a more urgent telegram and received no answer at all. The Empress wrote petulantly, "You must tell the workers that they must not strike; if they do, they will be sent to the front as a punishment . . . Only order is needed." But at last Nicholas was made to understand what was happening. On Thursday, March 2nd, he abdicated the throne in favor of his brother Michael. But the Soviet received this news with such disgust — "What, another Romanov?" — that Michael wisely refused.

The great patience of the people had at last been exhausted. They rose, like a slow, powerful wave, and washed the Romanov Dynasty out of their way.

There remained, as the only authority in Russia, a Provisional

Government, which had been hastily formed by the Provisional Committee of the Duma. It was made up of a few men of the liberal, landowning class, with Prince Lvov, a noble, at their head. It met in the Tauride Palace. In the same building sat the Workmen's and Soldiers' Soviet, which gave its support to the Provisional Government, on condition that it would call, as soon as possible, a Constituent Assembly, elected by the whole people, to write a constitution and set up a permanent government for a new and democratic Russia.

The first complete and successful revolution was accomplished.

It happened very easily, for nearly everyone was thankful to be rid of the Emperor and his officials. In the provinces the zemstvos took over the work of the Emperor's government; in the industrial cities soviets were formed, like that of Petrograd. In the thousands of villages life went on as usual, the peasants hoping, as they had always hoped, that now they would get more land.

All the civil liberties were immediately granted: freedom of speech and religion, freedom of the press and of public meeting. Everywhere people met and talked and planned the future. Telegrams were sent to every part of Siberia, calling home all the political exiles, and joyful letters were sent to those abroad. It was a quiet and peaceful revolution; people smiled at one another on the street and greeted one another almost as if it were Easter morning.

October, 1917

WHEN THE war broke out in 1914, Lenin was in Austria, where he had gone to be closer to Russia. After being held for a few weeks as a spy, he was sent out of the country and went back to Switzerland.

He had no doubts at all about the war. It was the natural result of imperialism, the last and worst form of capitalism, and one side was no better than the other. "This is a war between

two groups of predatory powers," he wrote, "fought for the division of colonies, for the enslavement of other nations, for advantage and privilege in the world market." Social Democrats, he said, must oppose their governments, must work for the defeat of their own countries and take advantage of the turmoil to start revolution and to establish socialism. "Turn the imperialist war into a civil war!" cried Lenin in the Bolshevik newspaper, *Pravda*, in the autumn of 1914.

He was almost alone in this attitude. Marx, who believed that men were divided only into classes, had said, "The workingman has no country." Yet everywhere all classes were fighting side by side for their own countries. The Social Democrats, at a meeting of the International Workingmen's Association two years before, had pledged themselves not to take part in any capitalist war; yet, with very few exceptions, the socialists in every warring country were supporting their governments. When Lenin heard that the socialists in the German Parliament had voted money for the war, he could not believe it was true. It was a shock and a bitter disappointment to him. But standing alone never daunted him or made him doubt for a moment his own conviction. He continued to write both articles and letters, urging his own point of view and blasting with scorn and anger the "renegades and traitors" who had betrayed socialism by supporting the war.

When the revolution of February, 1917, came, his one thought was to return immediately to Russia. But how could he get there? Except for a few neutral places like Switzerland, Europe was a battlefield; to reach Russia he would have to cross enemy territory or get permission from France and England to go by sea. They refused the permission. At last someone suggested that Russian exiles might be exchanged for German prisoners of war. This was arranged: Lenin, his wife, his companions Zinoviev and Radek, and about thirty more Russians were sent through Germany in a "sealed" car; that is, they were not allowed to communicate with anyone while they were on their way. The Germans were glad enough to send them; for the

return of a man who, ever since the beginning of the war, had urged his people to stop fighting, might help their victory.

On the night of April 4th, Lenin arrived at the Finland station in Petrograd. He was not at all sure that he would not be arrested the moment he left the train. But no — a crowd of eager people and a guard of sailors awaited him on the platform, with cheers, red banners and a big bouquet of roses. He was led to the "Tsar's Room," the imperial reception room in the station, where the President of the Petrograd Soviet received him, not nearly so cordially, for the President was a Menshevik, who had disagreed bitterly with Lenin ever since 1903. "Comrade Lenin," he said, "I welcome you to Russia in the name of the Petrograd Soviet and the whole Revolution. . . . The first task of the revolutionary democracy is to defend our Revolution from attack from within and from without. . . . We hope that you will join us in striving toward this goal." Lenin — an unimpressive figure in a worn overcoat, a hat hiding his fine head, his hands ill at ease with the bouquet — looked to the right and to the left and made no answer at all to this speech. Then he turned to the men who had crowded in behind him. "Dear comrades," he said simply, "soldiers, sailors and workmen, I am happy to greet in you the victorious Russian Revolution, the vanguard of the international proletarian army. Long live the international socialist revolution!"

Armored cars stood at the station to escort him to his lodging. He had to speak again, lifted to the top of one of the cars. Ten years of absence had not made people forget him. Riding on the car, searchlights showing him to the crowds, he was taken to the palace of a ballet dancer, who had been the Emperor's favorite; there he was to lodge. It was late, but the crowd called for him again and again. He came out on to the balcony and there poured out his thought to them, about the war and the Revolution and the future. When he finished, the crowd, who had placed all their hopes in the Provisional Government, felt, as one man said, as if they had been hit on the head.

There had been two powers in Russia up to that night: the Provisional Government and the Soviets. Now there was a third: Lenin. In the midst of revolution and world war he assumed with complete assurance the responsibility for one hundred and sixty million people and, indeed, in his own mind, for the whole world. It was one of the most extraordinary acts of leadership in history.

He was not pleased with the situation he found in Russia. The workmen of Petrograd had made the Revolution, with very little help from anyone; they had formed a Soviet, under the leadership of men of the intelligentsia, mostly Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, all of them socialists. Then the Soviet had put the Revolution into the hands of the Provisional Government, which was made up almost entirely of liberal bourgeois — professional men, business men and landowners — who wanted a democratic republic, like that of France or America. Lenin had said, back in 1903,* that, if left to itself, the workmen would put themselves under the protection of the bourgeoisie; and that was just what happened. He had also said that the Social Democrats must prevent this from happening. He was disgusted with the leaders of the Soviet, because they had not prevented it, because they had not kept the power and set up a dictatorship of the proletariat.

"Why did you not take the power," he asked them, "when it was in your hands?" "Don't you know your Marx?" they answered. "The time is not ripe for socialism. First there must be a bourgeois revolution, like this one, to overthrow the Tsar and the landlords. We must have a democracy; we must develop industry and capitalism in Russia before we have a proletariat strong enough to take power. This is a land of peasants, and peasants are not proletarians; they are bourgeois, because they own and love property." "You are behind the times," said Lenin. "Remember, Marx said that his philosophy was not a dogma,

* See page 299.

but a guide to action. Forget your formulas and study the new, living reality! Things have not gone as we expected. There is now in existence a dictatorship of the proletariat — the Soviets — side by side with the bourgeois government. Two revolutions are happening at once, under the spur of war. We must give all the power to the Soviets!”

He had to convince not only the other parties but his own Bolsheviks as well, for they were writing in *Pravda* that the Provisional Government must be supported and the war continued because now the Revolution must be defended. For their guidance Lenin had written down very clearly a program that is known as the April Theses. He presented it to them the morning after his arrival, and he hammered it into their minds in meeting after meeting until, in May, they were convinced and whole-heartedly with him.

The war must not be continued, he stated in this program, because there was nothing worth fighting for until capitalism was overthrown and socialism established. The only thing that mattered now was to follow the first bourgeois revolution by the second, the socialist revolution. Bolsheviks must not support the Provisional Government; their purpose must be to give all political power to the Soviets, who would then establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There must be in Russia not a constitutional republic but a republic of workers' and peasants' deputies; the land must be nationalized, used by the peasants and run by their Soviets; all industrial production and distribution must be nationalized and run by the Soviets of workers. And this second revolution would not be for Russia alone: it would be the beginning of a world socialist revolution, of which they were the vanguard and the hope.

These uncompromising words split the revolutionary unity of Russia as an iron wedge splits a block of wood. Hitherto all parties, however different their aims, were supporting the Provisional Government and waiting for the Constituent Assembly to decide what was to come. Now Lenin's words, carrying with

them the hope of peace and land and abundance, sent the Bolsheviks out with a crusading zeal to turn men's minds against the Government, against the war, and in an entirely new direction. Lenin's program admitted of no compromise with any other party. A battle of words and of ideas went on, day and night, in the streets, in the factories, in the army, in theaters and squares and in any halls that were available. In the dancer's palace, from its balcony, on the street, Lenin talked, simply and powerfully, repeating and explaining his theses again and again, until the eager crowds grasped and held them. "His words are as simple as truth itself," a workman said of him. He knew the power of words and made slogans the people could understand: "All power to the Soviets!" "Peace, bread, and land!"

Trotsky, who had escaped from Siberia, in 1905, after the first Petrograd Soviet had been exiled, and who was in America in February, arrived in Petrograd in May. He had stood with the Mensheviks in 1903, but soon became an independent Social Democrat, neither Menshevik nor Bolshevik. He was one of the few socialists who thought just as Lenin did about the war; after 1914 he saw eye to eye with Lenin on almost all important issues and was his right-hand man as long as Lenin lived. He was a brilliant orator, more fiery and impassioned than Lenin, and now gave all his time to convincing and persuading the people to follow the Bolsheviks. He spoke often until he had to be carried, exhausted, from the hall, but such was the hunger of the crowd for the new ideas that, after a short sleep, he was back again, talking. So were many other men. The Bolshevik program sounded good to the people: no more war, the land for the peasants, the factories for the workmen. What could be better?

The other parties had nothing so hopeful to offer, for although the Social Revolutionaries believed in giving the land to the peasants, they did not believe in overthrowing capitalism completely, nor did the Mensheviks, who not only supported

the Provisional Government but were taking part in it. So were the Kadets.

The Provisional Government had least of all to offer; for it was not concerned with the needs of the people, but with the war and with Russia's responsibilities as a nation. The Allies,* delighted to have Russia a democracy, recognized the new government at once through their ambassadors in Petrograd. They were, of course, anxious to have Russia play its part in the war, which was a life and death struggle for them; if Russia made peace with Germany, all the German troops on the eastern front could be hurled against the Allies in the west. They wanted to make sure, too, that the new government would pay back the enormous sums of money that they had loaned to the Emperor and that the money they had invested in Russian industries would be safe. The Provisional Government — led now by Alexander Kerensky, a young lawyer who came from Simbirsk, where Lenin was born — promised that Russia would fight and would pay all its debts. This meant more heavy burdens for the people.

The promise to fight was more easily given than kept, for the army was in very bad shape. The soldiers were far more interested in the Revolution than they were in the war. "Peace, bread and land," they said to each other. "What good are they to us when we are dead?" Thousands of them deserted, straggling back to their villages to get their share of the land. For the peasants, without waiting for anyone's permission, were already taking over the landlords' estates. It was done usually without violence: they turned the owners out and the owners went, either to the cities or abroad; while the peasants, according to their old usage, divided the land among themselves. This was better than living in frozen trenches or being blown to pieces by enemy fire. And the soldiers who stayed in the army had no heart for the war. They had their own soviets and obeyed no orders that

** The original Allies had now been joined by other countries, including the United States.*

the soviets did not agree to; the old discipline had broken down and military action was nearly impossible. Now Bolsheviks came to the front and told them not only to stop fighting, but to make friends with the German and Austrian soldiers, and to urge them, too, to start revolutions at home.

The Provisional Government, in fact, was hampered at every turn by the growing power of the Soviets. All over the country the people, with their inborn gift for organizing themselves, were building the Soviet system into a very workable sort of democratic government. The workmen in the factories or mines or artels, the soldiers in their regiments, elected their local Soviets; the local Soviets now elected delegates to an All-Russian Congress of Soviets, which met for the first time in Petrograd in June. According to Russian custom, this Congress met only for a short time; but, before it adjourned, it elected an executive committee which carried on its work until the next meeting of the whole Congress. The peasants had done the same thing: they, too, had an All-Russian Congress and an executive committee, now sitting in Petrograd.

Executive committees, or central committees, as they are often called, are very important parts of any Russian organization: political parties, soviets and congresses all elect these committees, which do most of the work. Alongside the Provisional Government, therefore, there was now the Executive Committee of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, the Executive Committee of the Peasants' Soviets and the powerful Soviet of Petrograd itself.

All the socialist parties encouraged the forming of these Soviets; but the executive committees were almost always made up of Mensheviks or Social Revolutionaries, as these parties still far outnumbered the Bolsheviks, who, in May, had only about forty thousand members in the whole of Russia. Lenin's followers, therefore, were working hard to increase their membership and their influence in every Soviet.

In June the Provisional Government made a last attempt to use the Russian army in the World War. Kerensky ordered an

attack on the Austrian army in Galicia. The attack was at first successful; then the Russians were driven back with frightful losses.

The people of Petrograd were enraged at this news. Early in July a great demonstration took place; again workers and soldiers poured into the streets. After four months of revolution they were still hungry and could see only war and worse hunger ahead. They marched to the Tauride Palace again, as they had done in February, but this time with a different purpose. They were led by Bolsheviks and were shouting the Bolshevik slogan, "All power to the Soviets!"

Then a strange thing happened. They offered the power to the Executive Committee of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, as they had offered it to the Duma in February, and the Committee refused it. For its members were not Bolsheviks; they were supporting the Provisional Government and did not believe in a socialist revolution — at least not now. It was these men, who talked but were unwilling to act, whom Lenin had not wanted in his party. Now, for the second time, they missed their chance to take over the government. A workman shook his strong fist under the very nose of one of the leaders of the Committee, shouting, "Why don't you take the power when they give it to you?" But the Committee sat there, pale and motionless, afraid of the very men they were supposed to represent. They called out troops to defend themselves against the crowd, and after two days, the workmen went home, grumbling and bewildered. Only Lenin, from the balcony of the ballet-dancer's palace, comforted them. "The time will come," he told them, "when the Soviets will take the power. Wait patiently and with revolutionary discipline."

The Bolsheviks were of course blamed for this disturbance. Everything was done to discredit them, and the old accusation that they were German agents was made the most of. "Wasn't Lenin sent here by the Germans?" people asked. "He was sent to break the morale of the army and to stop the war. I have heard

that the Bolsheviks receive thousands of rubles every month from Germany for their work. And look at the results!" *Pravda*, the Bolshevik newspaper, was shut down; an order was given to arrest the leaders. "Now they will shoot us all," Lenin said to Trotsky. "This is their moment." He went into hiding, first in Petrograd, then in Finland. Trotsky was sent to prison, but not shot.

This did not make things any easier for the Provisional Government, however, or for its Prime Minister, Kerensky. For the Bolshevik Party grew steadily, and more and more of its members were elected to every Soviet, especially that of Petrograd. Delegates to Soviets could be recalled at any moment, therefore the membership changed often and reflected the changing opinions of the people. Their longing for peace and for food and land made them elect more and more Bolsheviks, who alone offered an immediate answer to their needs and their desires. The one thing that might have held the allegiance of the people to the Provisional Government — the calling of the Constituent Assembly — was postponed from month to month. The elections were finally set for November and the meeting of the Assembly for December; but much might happen before that time. The Bolsheviks made the most of this delay, calling loudly for the Assembly.

Things went from bad to worse during the summer. There was great discontent among the peasants, whose grain and whose sons were taken from them for a war they hated. Their discontent was reflected in the army, for most of the soldiers were peasants' sons and knew what was happening in the villages. Frantic messages came from officers at the front: "The soldiers will not fight any longer! When the snow begins to fly they will make their own peace and go home!" An officer came to Petrograd to say, "The soldiers no longer want even bread or land; all they want is to stop fighting!" At the end of September the Germans took Riga and it was feared that they might march on Petrograd. It was obvious that the Provisional Government could not cope

with world war abroad and revolution at home, especially in a country split from end to end by bitter disagreement.

In September there was a Bolshevik majority in the Petrograd Soviet and Trotsky, who had been released from prison in August, was its chairman. Lenin was still in hiding, but he kept in close touch with everything that was happening in the city. (It is characteristic of him that during this crucial time he wrote one of his most important books — *The State and Revolution*.) Early in October he wrote to the leading Bolsheviks at the capital, "Now the crisis is ripe! Our day has come! We must take the state power immediately into our hands." Some of his party disagreed. The second All-Russian Congress of Soviets was to meet at the end of October and the Bolsheviks confidently expected a majority in it. "Wait for the Congress," they urged. "We have won Petrograd but we are not yet strong enough in the provinces. It is not time yet."

But Lenin had not spent his life preparing for revolution to be put off now. "Uprising is an art," Marx had said, and Lenin was a master of that art. "It is childish to wait for the Congress of Soviets," he wrote, "for everyone is expecting trouble then and the Cossacks will be called out. Conquer Kerensky first and we shall then be ready for the Congress. Weeks and even days will decide everything. Delay is a crime and a betrayal. Delay is death!" He used the very words that the Emperor's minister used in another crisis. He finally came into the city in disguise, met the central committee of his party, and they talked all night. His presence was enough: they decided, ten to two, to seize power by an armed uprising. This was on October 10th.

The uprising was put into the hands of the Petrograd Soviet. The Soviet and the Provisional Government no longer met in the same building. The Government sat in the Emperor's Winter Palace; the Soviet was housed in the Smolny Institute, a handsome building which had been a fashionable school for girls of noble birth and was now filled, day and night, with dirty,

tired and excited workmen and soldiers. The Soviet appointed a military committee, whose chairman was Trotsky. Trotsky was everywhere in these days, a brilliant speaker and a tireless leader. His name was coupled with Lenin's; Lenin directed and Trotsky carried out. Under the very eyes of Kerensky and the bourgeoisie of Petrograd — who still lived their normal lives, holding balls, going to restaurants and theaters, talking about the war — the second revolution was planned. No secret was made of it: the Bolshevik papers, all the party workers were shouting it in the streets.

Early in the morning of October 24th the Government closed the printing plant that issued two of the Bolshevik papers. Some of the workers there ran to Smolny, where they found Trotsky and a few others, for no one slept now. The military committee called on some soldiers, opened the printing plant again and the papers came out, a few hours late. This incident was the first act of war. That day the military committee ordered all the regiments in the city to hold themselves in readiness and to await orders, with the exception of the few troops that guarded the Winter Palace, where the Provisional Government held its meetings. Trotsky went to the grim old Peter and Paul Fortress and won over its garrison; the sailors at Kronstadt, already led by Bolsheviks, were ordered to bring the cruiser *Aurora* to train its guns against the Winter Palace. A ring of soldiers was then drawn around the Palace, while armed workmen, known as Red Guards, defended Smolny and the entrances to the city. And still life went on as if nothing were happening.

That night, with no violence, Bolshevik forces took over the telephone and telegraph offices, the electric-light plant, the railways and waterworks, the State Bank — all the buildings that controlled the life of the city. In the chilly dark morning of the 25th the work was done. At ten o'clock a proclamation was sent out by wireless all over the country: "The Provisional Government is overthrown! The state power is in the hands of the Soviets of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies!" At eleven Keren-

sky left the city in haste, hoping to bring loyal troops from Pskov, but he never returned; the other ministers sat at their council table and awaited their fate.

The Bolsheviks had expected to take the Winter Palace by noon of that day, the 25th; but the *Aurora* was late in coming up the river and did not appear until seven o'clock, when it was quite dark. When they were sure of the *Aurora*, the Bolsheviks telephoned to the Palace and asked the Government to surrender. The ministers refused. Spokesmen went from Smolny to persuade them, but they still refused. Then the guns from Peter and Paul thundered over the city. The first shots were blank, but they made just as much noise. The guns from the *Aurora* joined them. In the dark, the Bolshevik troops closed in on the Palace, over the big square where the workmen had been shot down on Bloody Sunday. The defending troops, one of them a battalion of women, soon surrendered. A crowd of soldiers, sailors and workmen poured into the lighted building, up the handsome staircases, into the imperial rooms, and took possession of the Palace. The ministers, pale and dignified, were sitting in their places; they were arrested and taken to the Peter and Paul Fortress, where the Emperor's ministers were already imprisoned. These were the men who had made the February revolution and who now, in less than a year, saw their life's work overthrown in its turn. There is probably no more bitter experience.

At two o'clock in the morning of October 26th the second revolution was accomplished and the state power was in the hands of the Bolsheviks.

Lenin had insisted on seizing the power before the meeting of the second Congress of Soviets because, although he wished the Soviets to be the governing power, he also wanted to make sure that the Bolsheviks would lead the Soviets. The uprising, because of various delays, was barely accomplished before the Congress met.

At the very time when the attack on the Winter Palace was taking place, during the night of October 25th, the delegates —

workmen from Petrograd and Moscow, from Kiev and Kharkov, soldiers from army soviets all over the country, in sheepskin coats or muddy uniforms — were tramping up the stairs of Smolny and crowding into the chairs and into every square inch of space in the assembly hall of the former elegant school. Through a blue haze of cheap tobacco smoke, tense and earnest faces looked toward the platform where the elected leaders would speak; all were excited and aware of the importance of the event in which they were taking part, for they knew of the uprising and wondered what was to be the outcome. As the meeting opened, the thunder of the cannon directed against the Winter Palace accompanied the debate.

Out of six hundred and fifty delegates to the Congress, three hundred and ninety were Bolsheviks; the rest were Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries. The Bolshevik majority was not large, and it was a majority only of the workers' and soldiers' deputies. The peasants had their own Congress of Soviets, as we have noted; there were a few peasants, however, in the crowd at Smolny and they were given votes.

The Bolsheviks were few but they were powerful, determined and united. In spite of their majority, it was not easy for them to impose their will on the Congress. The other parties were, naturally, furious because one party had seized the power by force. The Mensheviks walked out of the meeting; the Social Revolutionaries split into two factions, Left and Right: the Left upheld the Bolsheviks, while the Right walked out, after pleading for a government made up of all socialist parties. Trotsky dismissed them with cruel triumph, quoting a phrase of Karl Marx: "Go where you belong, into the rubbish can of history!" Meanwhile telegrams arrived, one after another, from different regiments that had received the proclamation of the night before, announcing the downfall of the Provisional Government. The soldiers gave joyful support to the Soviets and the telegrams were greeted with roars of applause. At six o'clock in the morning the meeting ended with the reading of a proclamation:

"Based upon the great majority of the workers, soldiers and peasants, based upon the triumphant uprising of the Petrograd workmen and soldiers, the Congress of Soviets assumes the power . . ."

The Congress met again the next evening. It was made up mostly of Bolsheviks now, although members of the other parties came back to protest. Lenin appeared for the first time after four months' absence; he was greeted with a storm of applause and took the position of leadership that he was to hold until he died. He read a proclamation offering immediate peace to the governments and peoples of all the warring countries, a peace without conquest and without war indemnities. He read a decree abolishing the private ownership of land, excepting the holdings of peasants and of Cossacks. The last important decree was the "Constitution of Power": "until the meeting of the Constituent Assembly, a provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government is formed which shall be named the Soviet of People's Commissars." The decrees and the list of commissars had been prepared by the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party. Lenin was President of the new Soviet of Commissars, Trotsky Commissar for Foreign Affairs. Other names were heard that would later become famous: Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, comrades of Lenin's; Rykov, Lunacharsky and Sverdlov; Stalin, a Georgian, who was Commissar for Nationalities.

The meeting did not go smoothly. A member of the Executive Committee of the Peasants' Soviets came in angrily. "We demand the instant release of our comrades, the ministers whom you have imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress!" He was told that the ministers would be released, but kept under guard in their houses. A Menshevik rose, pleading again for a government of all the socialist parties. "How can the Bolsheviks give either peace or bread to the people?" he asked. "No one party can overcome the enormous difficulties of our position. Only the majority of the people, supporting a government of socialist coalition, can accomplish the revolution." Even the Bolsheviks

were moved by his plea, and Trotsky answered him reasonably, assuring him that the appeal for peace would arouse the proletarians of other countries to revolution and so end the war. A delegate from the powerful Union of Railway Workers came in to say, "The Central Committee of the Union refuses absolutely to support the Bolsheviks, if they persist in isolating themselves from the whole democracy of Russia." This was a real blow, for it came from the proletariat, in whose name the Bolsheviks spoke.

But after each storm had passed, the decrees were carried and the new government was set up. The Congress elected a new Central Executive Committee of one hundred members, of whom seventy were Bolsheviks and thirty Left Social Revolutionaries, who accepted all that the Bolsheviks did. The real government, however, was the Soviet of People's Commissars (the Sovnarkom, as it was called, from the first syllables of each word in its title); and this was headed by Lenin.

As another cold dawn broke, the work of the Congress was done. The second revolution had come about as easily as the first. The dictatorship of the proletariat was established, directed by the Bolshevik Party, which represented about one tenth of one percent of the people and which commanded a bare majority of the workmen and the soldiers of a country, four fifths of whose people were peasants.

"A new type of state," said Lenin, "unknown to history, is being formed, which will assume the task of cleansing the earth of all exploitation, violence and slavery."

The New State

WHEN THE Bolsheviks seized power, they expected trouble, and they got even more than they expected.

Their first concern was peace. On October 28th, as they had promised in the Congress of Soviets, they proposed to all the warring countries an immediate armistice in which to consider

a peace without annexations or indemnities. They received no answer from anyone. Two weeks later they published the secret treaties between imperial Russia and its European Allies, and the Sovnarkom offered to make peace with the Germans; an offer which the latter, knowing Russia to be helpless, accepted gladly, while the Allies protested against Russia's withdrawal from the war. The Commander-in-Chief of the army and the All-Army Committee of Soldiers also protested, the latter demanding a government made up of all the socialist parties. The Commander was replaced by a Bolshevik officer, Krylenko, and on December 3rd the Russian, German and Austrian delegates met at Brest-Litovsk, in western Russia, to make a treaty of peace.

The Bolsheviks were old and wise in revolution, but young in government and international relations. They expected the Central Powers to withdraw from Belgium and northern France, from Serbia and Poland and the Baltic States, just because they had asked them to do so. Peace without annexations meant that all conquered territory must be abandoned.

They were also deeply hurt because the Allies did not join the peace negotiations. They did not consider that they had just overthrown by force the government that the Allies had recognized; that no one except a few European socialists had ever heard of Lenin or of Trotsky or knew what the Bolsheviks were trying to do. It still seemed that they might be German agents. No one knew whether they would keep the power for more than a few weeks, as indeed the Bolsheviks themselves did not know. But their desire for peace was sincere and profound. From the socialist point of view the war was even more wicked and senseless than it was to everyone else and they were deeply disappointed in not being able to end it at once.

The Bolsheviks also expected that the workmen of the principal European countries would follow their example and rise up in revolution immediately; even though they knew that the socialist leaders of Europe were supporting the war and even though they believed that the workmen must have powerful

leadership, like their own, to achieve revolution. There was no such leadership anywhere else. A hundred years of revolutionary struggle in Russia had culminated in the clear mind and the iron will of Lenin. Besides, in other countries that had greater political freedom, many proletarians and socialists hoped to achieve their aims peaceably through reform and growth.

The Bolsheviks' disappointment reached its climax when, after nearly a month of talking, the German general lost his temper and said, "The Russian delegation talks as if it stood victorious on our soil. The reverse is true: the victorious German armies are on Russian soil." He then presented them with the German terms, laying down a map on which a blue line was drawn. This line cut off from Russia part of Estonia, all of Lithuania and Russian Poland, and large areas of White Russia and Ukraine. All of these the Germans demanded. The Russians could accept the terms or refuse them.

Trotsky, who was in charge of the negotiations, returned to Petrograd, in a cold fury, for instructions. Lenin, in his usual clear-sighted and practical way, said there was nothing to do but accept the terms. There was no Russian army to fight with and the government must have a breathing spell in order to establish itself. The Bolshevik Party nearly split on the question, for several members of the Central Committee urged war now that their own cause was to be defended. Negotiations dragged on until in February the Germans declared that the armistice was over and advanced into Ukraine and, from the Baltic, toward Petrograd.

Lenin again insisted on immediate peace on any terms. He was twice voted down in the Central Committee of the Party and finally threatened to resign from the government. "It is time to put an end to revolutionary phrases," he said, "and get down to work. It is a question of signing the German terms now or signing the death warrant of the Soviet Government three weeks hence." The vote was taken: out of fifteen committee members,

seven supported Lenin, four opposed him, and four did not vote. A deputation was sent to sign the treaty.

The German terms were now much worse than before, for the Central Powers demanded Estonia and Latvia — the precious Baltic coast for which Peter had fought so long — and that the whole of Ukraine, which provided most of Russia's grain and a great deal of its industry, be separated from Russia and made an independent state which, of course, would be under German control. Already hungry and needy, Russia lost by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk a quarter of its farmland and population, a third of its crops and its industries, three quarters of its coal and iron; and it had to pay besides a large indemnity. This was the peace of no annexations and no indemnities. It was a bitter start in a new life.

There was trouble at home as well as abroad. In November the elections for the Constituent Assembly took place and in December the Assembly, elected by "free, universal, direct and equal suffrage," as had so long been desired, met in Petrograd, in the Tauride Palace.

It was supposed to write a constitution and to decide on a permanent form of government; it had been the hope of Russia ever since the Decembrists had demanded it in 1825 and was still the hope of all those who wanted a democratic republic. But now it came too late. The Bolsheviki, before they came to power, had called for the election because they knew the people wanted it; but they knew also that they would have a minority in the Assembly, because of the enormous peasant vote, which would support the Social Revolutionaries. They wanted no constitution that they themselves did not write. Besides, they already had the very government they wanted: the Soviets, led by their own Party. What use had they for a Constituent Assembly?

The delegates to the Assembly began to arrive in Petrograd in December. They sensed trouble at once and prepared for it, but they had little chance. They were, in fact, mostly Social Revolu-

tionaries; their supporters, the millions of peasants, were scattered over thousands of miles of land; while the Bolsheviks had *their* supporters, the proletariat, armed and concentrated in the city. Force prevailed over election. The Bolsheviks arrested all the delegates of the Kadet Party as "enemies of the people" and admitted only socialists; they dispersed with rifle fire the joyful crowds who celebrated with red banners the opening of the Assembly; and they filled the Tauride Palace with Red Guards and armed sailors.

The Assembly met, tensely, on January 18th, 1918. There were about seven hundred delegates, of whom one hundred and seventy-five were Bolsheviks, three hundred and seventy Right Social Revolutionaries, forty Left Social Revolutionaries and the rest members of smaller socialist parties. A member of the Right Social Revolutionary Party was chosen as chairman. The chairman of the Bolshevik Central Committee then read a statement which proposed that the Assembly approve everything that the Soviets had decreed since November. The proposal was voted down, and, in an uproar, the Bolsheviks walked out, followed by the Left Social Revolutionaries. The rest of the Assembly (the majority) went on with their own program until, in the early morning, a sailor told them to stop, because the guard was tired. The meeting adjourned at 4.40 a.m., in a black winter night, until the next afternoon; but it never met again. Next morning the gates of the Tauride Palace were shut and no one but Bolsheviks could pass the Red Guards. The Constituent Assembly was dissolved.

In less than a week a new Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies met in the Tauride Palace and approved the Bolshevik program. The Russian Empire was renamed "The Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic." At the end of the week's meeting, peasant deputies joined the Congress, which could thereafter call itself one of the Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. The Soviets were now the only authority, but they had made bitter enemies.

In the breathing spell allowed first by the armistice and then by the peace treaty the new government began to construct a socialist state on the wreck of two former governments. For fifteen years Lenin had wanted to get rid of talkers and to act; now he had his chance and he took it.

In a socialist state the government owns the means of production and produces everything that is needed, for the use of the people and not for its own profit. Therefore the government took over the big industries of the country, the State Bank, and all trade, both foreign and domestic. A Council of National Economy was established and many government commissions to take care of the economic life of the whole people. Factories were at first given over to the workmen; the eight-hour working day was decreed and social insurance for illness, old age, injury, unemployment and so forth. The only industry left in private hands was farming.

The Bolsheviks believed in socializing the land as well as the factories, but food was desperately needed and it would have been dangerous at this time to take their land from the peasants. Indeed, they encouraged the peasants to seize all they had not yet taken from the landlords; excepting the largest, most prosperous estates, which were taken by the government and run as state farms. The Bolsheviks were not by any means sure of the peasants' support, for the peasants were not socialists; their age-old passion was to own land. The only peasants they could count on were the poorest, those who owned no land and were employed as farm laborers, and who, therefore, formed a sort of country proletariat. A subtle sort of warfare was begun, even at this time, in the villages against the peasants who owned land. "Committees of the Poor" were formed of the landless ones, who were encouraged to inform the police of any hoarding of grain or of any hiding of grain from the bands of Red Guards who came to collect it. This was the first step in socializing the land.

The second revolution was not just a political one or even an economic one; it was a social revolution as well, the most com-

plete that any people has ever suffered. The Marxists hated the bourgeoisie and everything that it stood for, excepting its immense contributions to the material welfare of mankind, through the development of science and industry. These they meant to take over and use to the utmost. But otherwise bourgeois society was to be destroyed to the root. All class privileges and titles were abolished; the palaces and big houses of the nobles were turned into clubs for workmen or schools for their children or into government offices. All other houses were divided into one- or two-room apartments and given to workmen's families. The noble or bourgeois families, who were able to do so, fled to foreign countries; those who could not, stayed and received the worst of everything: the least food, the worst lodging and any job that would keep them alive.

The Church was separated from the state; all government support was taken from it and priests were not allowed to have any part in education. No one was forced to give up his faith, but all religion was ridiculed and discouraged; for there was no place for God in Marx's theory of history; he himself had said, "Religion is the opium of the people." Hence no one who believed in God could be a Bolshevik; other people could believe or not, as they chose.

Under socialism the state was supposed to take care of all its citizens, from birth until death. The family was no longer necessary, for that belonged to the old order. Public nurseries were established as far as was possible, likewise public kitchens and communal dining rooms. Women were given equal rights in all fields with men. Two people could marry merely by registering their names in an office, and a divorce could be obtained at will by either the man or the woman. Free medical care and free education were to be given to everyone; indeed, at first, free transportation was given, both in the cities and on the railroads. To many of the people, who had suffered so long under a tyrannical government and under the heavy authority of parents or husbands, this sudden freedom and these sweeping plans were

intoxicating. The young, especially, flung themselves with ecstasy into the building of the new state.

Such a complete overturn of the life of a people could not be accomplished easily or without force, especially since it was decreed by a minority. In December, 1917, an Extraordinary Commission, known from its initials as the Cheka, was set up "to fight counter-revolution and sabotage." This was nothing less than the familiar political police force. The government also controlled the people by controlling the supply of food: food cards were issued and could be withdrawn if there were any evidence of disobedience or of protest. In February, 1918, a new army, the Red Army, was organized, made up at first of volunteers. A censorship more rigid than that of the Emperors was set up and the prisons and places of exile, emptied for a brief while from February to October, began to be filled again with those who opposed the new state.

In February, 1918, the Russian calendar was adjusted to agree with the calendar used everywhere else. Hitherto, its dates had lagged nearly two weeks behind those of the rest of the world.

In March the name Bolshevik was changed to Communist, for it was absurd to continue a name that simply meant the majority of the Social Democratic Party. Lenin believed that the latter name had been forever dishonored when the Social Democrats of all countries supported the war of 1914.

In March, too, the government moved from Peter's city to the old capital in the country's heart — Moscow — and Lenin, with the People's Commissars, ruled from the Kremlin.

The immense work of creating this new society was undertaken by inexperienced men, under devastating conditions, in a backward and war-exhausted land. They worked day and night in unheated, unlighted buildings; they never had enough to eat. In the spring of 1918 these conditions became infinitely worse, for civil war broke out, which for two and a half years ravaged the whole country, plunged the people into disease, famine and sudden death, and prevented all further progress.

Civil War

THERE WAS plenty of opposition to the second revolution. The Cossacks were the first to rebel openly, on the Don and Kuban rivers. Then the peasants were roused to rebellion by having their grain forcibly taken from them to feed the workers in the cities. Officers of the imperial army were ready to lead any rebellions; the leaders of other political parties, especially those who had been members of the Constituent Assembly, were ready, too. But none of these, who were divided and without war materials, could have stood long against the Communists, if they had not received foreign help; for the Communists were united and highly organized, and they held the industrial cities of the north and the war supplies of the Emperor's army.

The Communists' relations with the former Allies of Russia were not happy. As a result of the Brest-Litovsk peace, the Germans had moved their troops from the Russian front to the west, and had made a wide advance into France, which cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of British and French soldiers. The Germans, besides, were now supplied abundantly with food and war materials from Ukraine and southern Russia. In February, 1918, the Sovnarkom announced that the new government would not repay any of the loans made by foreign countries to Russia before the October Revolution. These loans, especially from the French, were very large. The Communists hated the Allies as much as they did the Germans and rarely referred to them except as "imperialist robbers." They made no secret of their desire to create and encourage proletarian revolution and civil war in all countries; an international organization, the Comintern, was created for that purpose. The Allies, on the other hand, wanted to revive the war in Russia in order to keep the Germans busy there. They returned the distrust of the Communists and did not recognize the new government. To the passions of war were added the passions of social revolution. No understanding was possible.

Distrust increased until at last it flared into open enmity. Great

stores of war materials had been sent, before the October Revolution, to Murmansk, Archangel and Vladivostok by the Allies, and were still lying at those ports. Detachments of foreign troops were guarding them. In the spring and summer of 1918 more Allied troops — mostly British and American — were sent to Murmansk and Archangel, and a large force of Japanese troops landed at Vladivostok.

The opponents of the Communists, who had no way of obtaining arms and ammunition, sought the support of these foreign armies. Those Russians, who had escaped abroad and who were known as "Whites," to distinguish them from the "Red" Communists, appealed to foreign governments for help, promising in return to continue the war and to repay all debts. Although the Allied forces had promised at first not to interfere in Russian affairs, they soon did, partly in the hope of renewing the war on the eastern front and partly because they would have preferred a White government in Russia to a Red.

In Archangel a fine old revolutionist, Nicholas Tchaikovsky, with seven other former members of the Constituent Assembly, overthrew the Archangel Soviet and set up a provisional northern government of their own. It was supported by eighteen thousand British troops, five thousand Americans and a few thousand French and Italians.

A far more serious situation arose in Siberia. In Samara, where Lenin had lived in his youth, thirty-four Social Revolutionaries, all former members of the Constituent Assembly, formed another government, encouraged by the discontented peasants of that region and by many members of the powerful cooperative societies. They obtained foreign military support in a strange way.

In November, 1917, there were about forty thousand Czech soldiers in Russia. Most of them had been forced, in 1914, to fight for Austria (for Czechoslovakia was part of Austria before 1918) and had deserted wholesale to the Russian side, in order to fight against Austria for their freedom. After Russia made peace

in March, 1918, they asked to be allowed to go on fighting and the only way they could do this was to go around the world, through Siberia and across the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, to join the Allies in western Europe. The Russians allowed them to do this; but in May, when the first Czechs had reached the Pacific and the last regiments were still on the Volga, misunderstandings arose and quarrels occurred. The Russians, whose army had melted away, distrusted this body of trained soldiers; the Czechs, lost in a great wilderness, thousands of miles from home, distrusted the Russians. The Czechs rebelled, seized the whole Siberian railway and supported the White government. They were by far the best soldiers then in Russia.

The Red Army, however, was fast being built up. Trotsky was put in command of it and for two and a half years he lived on an armored train that went back and forth from one front to another. Military service was now compulsory; soldiers' committees and the election of officers were abolished and severe discipline restored. Officers of the imperial army who were willing to serve the new government trained the new recruits, who were hardened by immediate battle.

The summer and autumn of 1918 were desperate for the Communists. They held little of Russia excepting the old Muscovy. Archangel and Murmansk and a large area to the south were occupied by the Whites and the Allies. The whole of Siberia was in the hands of the Whites under the command of an imperial officer, Admiral Kolchak. Vladivostok was occupied by the Japanese and the Americans, while Ukraine and the Baltic States were occupied by the Germans. And the war was not only a military one: the disappointed Social Revolutionaries used against the new power the same weapons that they had used against the emperors. In August a girl shot Lenin and nearly killed him; another Communist leader, Uritsky, was assassinated. For this five hundred prisoners were shot in Petrograd, and the Cheka began to inspire the dread that from now on was attached to its name.

The First World War ended in November, 1918, for Germany was defeated by the Allied armies in battle and by revolution at home. But that did not bring the Civil War in Russia to an end. The Germans withdrew from all occupied territory and the shameful Brest-Litovsk Treaty was canceled. But the Allies did not withdraw their forces; indeed, they increased their help to all the White armies, providing them with enormous quantities of guns, ammunition, tanks and equipment that were no longer needed in western Europe. The British occupied the great oil centers of Baku and Batum on the Caspian Sea and the French took Odessa. A new attack was made from the west by a White officer, General Yudenich, who in the summer of 1919 came within sight of Petrograd.

The Civil War, which lasted two and a half years, is a tale of heroism and horror and infinite suffering, too long a tale to be told here. It was the natural outcome of violent revolution, of the seizure of power by a minority. But it is the glory of Soviet Russia which, like many another new nation in this lawless international world, had to fight for its life. On every front, north, south, east and west, the Red Army beat back its enemies, covering enormous distances on tottering railways and ill-shod feet, with empty stomachs, fighting with bayonets against foreign tanks, but with an ever-increasing faith. The unity and discipline of the Communists, as well as their vision of a new and happy world, made them fight as the French had fought for their bourgeois revolution over a century before. The Whites, on the other hand, were, as they had always been, divided and undecided; and, wherever they went, their leaders, mostly officers of the imperial army, proved by their actions that they wanted no new world, but only to restore the old world of landlords and nobles. They used the old methods: flogging and shooting the peasants, and burning their villages. Although the peasants did not love the Bolsheviks, they hated the Whites much more and fought with passion against them.

The part of the Allies — the United States, Britain, France

and Japan — in this war which raged all over Russia, was inglorious. They lost very few men, as they rarely took part in the actual fighting, and their part has been largely forgotten by themselves. It will never be forgotten by Soviet Russia that those countries prolonged an agonizing war, put arms into their enemies' hands and blockaded their ports for more than two years so that no supplies or food of any sort could enter the beleaguered land. Only in January, 1920, when it was clear that the Whites were defeated, was the blockade lifted; by November, 1920, two years after the end of the World War, all foreign soldiers had been withdrawn, except the last of the Japanese, who reluctantly departed two years later.

Russia then regained its old boundaries, excepting Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. Finland had declared its independence in 1918. The other four had been made into independent states by the Treaty of Versailles, between Germany and the victorious Allies. Since Russia had withdrawn from the war in 1917, it had no voice in the treaty of peace.

The tempest of war and revolution finally subsided; the tidal waves of invasion and massacre ebbed from every border; but they left the country devastated beyond belief.

Only an eighth of the factories were working: they could not get materials, they were ruined by ignorant workmen's control, they could not pay their men. Two thirds of Petrograd's population had drifted back to the country or to the army or had died. The harvest was half of what it should have been; the cattle and horses had decreased by millions. To add to the misery of this new Time of Troubles, there was a bad drought for two summers, in 1920 and 1921, in the rich southern farming lands. Nearly fifty million people hungered in consequence and probably five million died of starvation. Foreign countries, especially America, now came to Russia's aid, to repair what they had helped to cause; the American Relief Association fed ten million people and the Red Cross sent vast amounts of medical supplies.

Yet the Communists held fast through all this desperate time and came out from the Civil War stronger and more assured than they were when it began. The foreign support of the Whites had done the very opposite of what had been intended: it had driven many doubting or even opposing forces into the Communist fold, in a passionate defense of their country against invasion and foreign interference. All the workmen in the growing industrial cities naturally supported the proletarian revolution, while the peasants hoped that it would at least bring them something better than the Whites had to offer. The war had also trained a resolute army of five million men.

But it had ruined the country to such an extent that the building of socialism could not be carried on. Even during the war there had been revolts among the peasants, for the only way the army and the factories could be fed was by demanding the peasants' grain whether they wanted to sell it or not and by taking it forcibly when they did not. The result was that they began to sow only enough grain for their own use, and the cities starved. In the spring of 1921 the sailors of the Baltic Fleet and the Kronstadt garrison mutinied. They had been the champions of the October Revolution, but they came from peasant villages and knew what was going on there. Now, the slogan of their mutiny was "the Soviets without the Communist Party!" There was also a serious peasant revolt in the province of Tambov.

Unlike the emperors, Lenin knew when to be warned, when the people had been pushed too far. He stopped insisting that, under these desperate conditions, they must learn completely new ways of living, and he allowed a return to the accustomed ways. "We are in such a state of poverty, ruin and exhaustion," he said, "that everything must be set aside to increase production." Instead of demanding all the grain the peasants had, beyond their own needs, and paying them in worthless money, a tax of a certain amount of grain was demanded and whatever was left over could be sold in the markets. Private trade was allowed again; the shops took down their shutters and goods ap-

peared miraculously in the windows. Foreigners and Russians were allowed to open factories and were given concessions, as in the old capitalist days, to produce oil, lumber, iron and other essential materials. This change of policy was known as the N.E.P., the New Economic Policy.

The government, in need of capital, asked for loans of money from the "imperialist bandits," and relations with other nations improved. Trade treaties were made; in 1924 England recognized the Soviet government and sent an ambassador to Moscow. Other European countries followed this example, but the United States still held aloof.

Slowly, for the power of recovery in human beings is amazing, the country began to reach the 1913 levels of production and pay. A storm greater than that of the Time of Troubles, almost to be compared to the Mongol invasions, had passed over the people and again they rose, like the grass after a steppe fire, like the forest after a tempest.

Lenin had carried a burden too great for any man's strength. The wound he had received in 1918 was a serious one; he stopped his colossal labors only for necessary sleep and he worked, as everyone did, under physical hardship. Early in 1922 he had an illness of the brain that forced him to rest; in May he had a stroke and partly lost the power of speech. He recovered enough to go back to work in the fall of that year but in December he had another stroke. He rested at the village of Gorki, thirty miles from Moscow. Stricken as he was, he still wrote and dictated important papers for the direction of the Communist Party. After a fourth stroke he died in January, 1924. He was nearly fifty-four years old; about the same age at which other powerful rulers of Russia had died.

The hundreds of thousands of men and women who, in the bitter cold of January, stood beside the railway all the way from Gorki to Moscow, when his body was taken to the capital, or who came to Moscow to walk sorrowfully past his open coffin, showed how deep a devotion he had inspired in them. His

widow, Krupskaya, a plain, stoutish woman, stooped from much work for the Revolution, said afterward, at the memorial meeting held for him by his Party, "I want to say to you that Vladimir Ilyich's heart beat with ardent love for all working-men and for all the oppressed. He never spoke of this himself, and I would not speak of it at any other, less solemn moment . . ."

His body was embalmed and placed in a glass coffin, like that of one of the old saints, and a great square granite tomb was raised over it in the Red Square, beside the wall of the Kremlin. And the name of Petrograd was changed to Leningrad, for a more powerful man than Peter himself had lived and died in Russia.



CHAPTER XVIII

THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS

The Government

LENIN ONCE SAID, "The Soviet system is a new, immeasurably higher and incomparably more democratic type of government than any hitherto known." It was, undoubtedly, a democratic form of government, born of the need of the people and developed by them, during the fateful year 1917, into a competent, representative national government. It grew out of the village mir, the factory committee, the Cossack camp, the workman's artel: nothing was more natural to the Russian than to organize himself collectively, to choose a headman, to elect representatives to a higher organization. When the October Revolution came, the duties of government were taken over by Soviets in every village, town and city of any importance. There were local Soviets and there was a national Soviet, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets, which might have undertaken the govern-

ment of the whole country. The Soviet system was very like what Speransky had planned in his constitution and what the zemstvos had asked for for so long.

But the Soviets were only a part of the new government. There was also the Communist Party. The share that each of these two parts takes in the government and the balance between them must be understood, if one is to know anything about the new Russia.

When the Civil War was over and the country was united again — excepting Finland and those western provinces that had been given independence by the Treaty of Versailles — a constitution was written, in 1923, and ratified in January, 1924.

A federal union was established, called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics — the U.S.S.R. The name Russia was purposely left out in order to encourage other countries to become socialist and join the Union; for at that time Communists still thought of world revolution and a world union of socialist republics as a possibility in the near future. In 1923 there were only four republics in the Union: the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (R.S.F.S.R.), by far the largest part of the country; Ukraine, White Russia and Transcaucasia. Since then other republics have either been formed within the area of the R.S.F.S.R. or have been added, until there are, at the present time, sixteen republics in the Union. In principle, the Union was like any other federation, such as the United States or Canada: that is, each republic controlled its own internal life, while the federal government alone controlled those things that concerned the Union as a whole: its foreign affairs, the army and navy, the national police force, transportation, posts and telegraph and — an entirely new concern of government — the planning of the economy of the Union.

The Soviet system was embodied in the new constitution. Each village, factory, district, town and region (as the larger geographical areas are called) had its own Soviet. The local Soviets elected representatives to the district Soviets, the district Soviets

sent representatives to the regional congresses and the regional congresses elected their delegates to the All-Union Congress, which met in Moscow. This system reminds one of a pyramid, its broad base being the small Soviets all over the land, tapering upward to the apex, which was the All-Union Congress.

After the U.S.S.R. was established in 1924, a second body was added to the Congress: the Soviet of Nationalities, consisting of twenty-five deputies from each republic and smaller numbers of deputies from the smaller political divisions. The two bodies, in this respect, were like the Senate and the House of Representatives in the United States: in one the delegates were chosen according to population; while in the other the same number of delegates was sent from each republic, regardless of its size.

According to the constitution, the All-Union Congress was the highest power in the state. It met once a year and its members were elected for a four-year term. Since there were about fifteen hundred members, who met for a very short time, they followed the Russian custom and chose a Central Executive Committee (known, because of the Russian love for abbreviation, as the Tseek, from its initials) which met three times a year. This committee elected a still smaller body of about twenty members, the Presidium, which met continually and did the real work of the Congress.

The Presidium elected the Soviet of People's Commissars (the Sovnarkom), which took the place of the Cabinet in bourgeois democracies; but it was much more powerful, since it ran all the industries and finance of the country, as well as its political life. The Sovnarkom elected a chairman; but there was no office that could be compared to that of the President of the United States.

In elections, preference was always given to the industrial workers, for this was a proletarian government, created by a proletarian revolution. No one who lived without working or who lived on the hired labor of another person (for it was still

possible to do so, under the N.E.P.), no member of the former aristocracy or bourgeoisie or the priesthood could vote or hold office. Industrial workers sent one representative for every twenty-five thousand voters to the regional congresses, while peasants sent one representative for every hundred and twenty-five thousand of their population. The proletariat was the upper class, the leader of the peasants, who might be called the second class, while the former upper classes were now the lowest. More than half of the members of the All-Russian Congress of Soviets were workmen; the rest were peasants or professional men and women. Among the members were Georgians, Tartars, Turks, men and women from the far north or east, who sat in the imperial halls of the Kremlin, dazed by their own importance. For the new state was true to Marxism: class division and political opinion were all that mattered; the only discrimination was along those lines. If a man was a workman or a peasant and agreed with the new government, his race, creed or color mattered not a whit.

For one of the things that the Communists most wanted to change in Russia was the condition of the many different races and tribes of men which had been conquered, or included at one time or another in the huge empire, and had been kept in subjection and ignorance by the Tsars. The new government immediately did everything in its power to restore the pride and independence of Tartar, Turk, Mongol and Samoyed, freeing them from superstition, educating them and encouraging their native arts and languages. For these, like the workmen, were the oppressed, whom Lenin loved.

The Soviet system, excepting that it was frankly based on domination by one class, was indeed democratic and would, perhaps, have been a "more democratic type of government than any hitherto seen" if it had been the whole government. But it was only a part — the part which carried out the decrees and did the will of the real government — the Communist Party.

The Communist Party is an organization quite new in the history of the world. It grew, as we have seen, out of Lenin's band of "professional revolutionists," trained by him into a disciplined unity that enabled them to overcome the opposition and the colossal difficulties that faced them, and to embark upon their purpose — the establishment of a socialist state. "Without a party of iron," Lenin said, "tempered in the art of conflict . . . such a struggle as ours cannot be conducted." Such a party was necessarily small, since few men and women were capable of the devotion, the self-sacrifice, the hard, unceasing work, the enduring of danger and of physical hardship that were demanded of them. When Lenin died there were only about half a million Communist Party members in a country of one hundred and seventy million people; and the leaders of the Party, the real rulers of those hundred and seventy million, were only about twenty.

The Communist Party was not like other political parties, which usually welcome as many members as they can get. It was a band of political and economic experts whose life work was the government of a great country. Since their belief in Marxism equalled in intensity and devotion other people's religious faith, they were very like a religious brotherhood, especially in their obedience to the authority of the Party, and their willingness to go anywhere and do anything that the Party demanded. It was like a religious order, too, in that it was very difficult to enter. There was a period of probation, like a novitiate, which varied from six months to two or three years, depending on the class and the record of the candidate. During that period the candidate must study the doctrines of Marx and Lenin and the methods by which the Communists put these doctrines into practice; his character, his life and his personal habits were also studied by his examiners.

For a Communist must set an example to others, wherever he was: he must not drink too much; his personal life must be his second interest, his service to the Party and the community being

the first. At first, the Party member had to accept a salary which was about equal to that of a skilled manual worker, while other people might receive much more; and more was always demanded of the Communist than of the non-Communist. Even after he was admitted to the Party, he was examined often at his Party meetings, and if he failed in any way in his duty, he was expelled. This was like excommunication in the old days of the Church; it was little better than death. But these were dedicated people, whose purpose must not be endangered by half-heartedness or negligence. "You are holy men," Lenin said to them once, "fit to go alive into Paradise."

Besides the Party, there was also the Communist League of Youth, the Comsomol, for young people from fourteen to twenty-three years of age; the Young Pioneers, for children from ten to sixteen years old, and the Little Octobrists, for still younger children. There were usually twice as many Comsomols as there were Communists and twice as many Pioneers and Octobrists as Comsomols; for the duties and the requirements became more strict, the more mature the person grew. Comsomols and Pioneers were also expected, in their schools and their communities, to set an example of discipline, obedience, enterprise and responsibility. Russian youth, which knew only the Revolution, and was fired with the vision and the high purposes of socialism, entered with all the joy and enthusiasm of the young into the immense tasks that lay ahead. The Communists, from the first, counted on the young people, to whom they offered opportunities undreamed of before; and the Comsomols supplied the Party with many of its best members.

When the Civil War was over and the new state was safely established, the work of the Communist Party was not over. For the building of socialism was just beginning then and that was their chief task. The purpose of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Marx had said, was to change capitalism into socialism. When socialism was truly established, all over the world, there would be no need for government at all: "the state would wither away;"

there would be left only the production and the distribution of all the things that men need for their use and comfort. "All the world will become one office and one factory," Lenin said, "with equal work and equal pay for all." Until that day, however, until socialism was accepted everywhere, the proletariat must be in power and must be able to enforce its will. Since Lenin had believed that the proletariat could not do this alone, the Party kept its leadership. More and more workmen and peasants were educated in Marxism and brought into the Party, but it kept in its hands the planning and the direction of everything that went on in Russia.

This double government of the Soviets and the Party started with the October Revolution, when the Communists (the Bolsheviks, as they were then) "gave the power" to the Congress of Soviets, appointing at the same time a Soviet of People's Commissars — chosen by their Central Committee and headed by Lenin — who ruled by decree. It has continued ever since.

The Communist Party was organized very much as the Soviets were organized, except that a selected few took part in it, instead of the whole people. In the factories, the villages, in offices and schools, in the army and navy, in the towns and cities, there were Communist "cells": that is, a group of three or more members of the Party. These elected one of themselves to a district Party organization, which sent representatives to the regional Congress, which sent its delegates to the All-Union Party Congress, meeting in Moscow. The Congress elected an Executive (or Central) Committee, which was divided into three sections: the Secretariat, the Organizational Bureau (the Orgburo) and the Political Bureau (the Politburo). The first two sections had to do with the organization of the Party; the third, the Politburo, made up of about a dozen men, planned and directed everything of importance that was done in the Union. The decisions of the Politburo were known as the "Party Line": a good name, for it was like a line, clearly drawn for everyone to follow; and woe to him who strayed to the Right or to the Left of it!

"In the Soviet Union," said Joseph Stalin, who was Lenin's successor, "no important political or organizational problem is ever decided by our Soviets, without directives from our Party. The dictatorship of the proletariat is substantially the dictatorship of the Party."

There were, therefore, from top to bottom of the state, two distinct government organizations, the Soviets and the Party: one universal and highly democratic, the other rigidly selected and having absolute authority, an authority enforced by an enormous police force and an army.

Communists belonged to both organizations, since government was their business; that is, they were members of the Party, perhaps Party officials, and held positions in the Soviets also. In the Soviets of small towns or villages, where there were few Party members, there might be no Communists at all; but in the district and regional Soviets there were more and more Communists; in the All-Union Congress two thirds or more of the members were Communists; in the Executive Committee the proportion was still higher, and all the People's Commissars were Communists. This happened because, in every election, the people elected a list of candidates prepared or approved by the Party organization in each locality. The presence of Communists in the government and their increasing proportion in the more important government bodies made it easy for the Soviets to do their part: that is, to carry out the directions of the Party. The principal thing any Congress of Soviets had to do was to approve plans and programs presented to it by the People's Commissars.

The love of unity and unanimity is deeply rooted in the Russian mind: these elections and decisions were almost always unanimous. There was another reason, too, for unanimity: all decisions were made by a show of hands, and the question was very often put in a negative form, "Who is against?" It would be a very brave man who dared to raise a lone hand in opposition to a candidate or a proposal of the Party.

The part played by the Soviets, however, was not only a

passive one. Before an important plan was decided on, before an election, it was discussed, high and low, in every factory and village and town which it concerned. "How can dairy products be increased in such a region?" "Is it wise to try an entirely new crop in a certain soil?" "How can farmers obtain the necessary tools when there are no factories to produce the tools?" "How many factories are needed and where shall they be built?" "Is this man or that one best fitted to be chairman of the local soviet?" Such things were discussed freely and suggestions were made and sent to the local planning commission, which sent them on to the national commission, if it was a matter of national importance. To Russian peasants and workmen, who had had no voice whatever in government outside of their own mir or artel, this participation was intoxicating. Discussion went on until the final decision was made, with Party approval; then all discussion stopped and all energies were turned to carrying out whatever had been decided. And in carrying out the plan, there was all the active work, and room for all the enterprise, courage and initiative that anyone possessed, so long as it was used in perfect obedience to the decision that had been made.

This practice of discussion, decision and obedience was followed in the Party as well as in the Soviets. In Executive Committees, in the Central Committee, in the Politburo itself, there might be violent debate and fundamental disagreement, but once the vote was taken and the decision made, debate stopped, obedience must be absolute, and those who had opposed a plan must work for it as whole-heartedly as those who had proposed or supported it. This system is as different as anything can be from the political system of bourgeois democracies.

No provision was made in the Constitution for a head of the state. There was the chairman of the Tseek (the Central Committee of the All-Union Soviet) who was sometimes called the President. There was the chairman of the Sovnarkom, who was known as the Premier. But the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which was not mentioned in the Constitution, was

the real ruler and who was its head? Lenin, who had created the Party and led the October Revolution, was its unquestioned head as long as he lived. But what would happen after his death? No one knew.

It might have been supposed that Trotsky, Lenin's right-hand man, would have succeeded him. Abroad and at home their names and their pictures were always seen together: "Lenin and Trotsky" was a phrase known all over the world. But Trotsky had led as intensely active a life as Lenin had, and he had burned out a great deal of his fiery energy. He was ill when Lenin died, near Tiflis in Georgia. In spite of his service to the Revolution, he was not as deeply loved as Lenin; he was independent, arrogant, with a brilliant intellect which was sometimes impatient of lesser minds. Old Bolsheviks (that is, men who had been Bolsheviks before 1917) always remembered that he had joined the Party only in August, 1917, and that he had once been a Menshevik, a despised word.

There were other powerful men in the Party, without whom no second revolution could have been made: Bukharin, the theorizer and writer; Kamenev and Zinoviev, faithful Marxists and old comrades of Lenin; Rykov, who succeeded Lenin as Chairman of the People's Commissars; Tomsky, leader of the Trade Unions; Lunacharsky, Commissar of Education; Pyatakov, leader of the Revolution in Ukraine and later a great organizer of industry; Rakovsky, head of the Soviet in Ukraine; Dzerzhinski, Chief of the Cheka, and many more. Most powerful among them was Joseph Stalin, who had been General Secretary of the Party since 1922.

He was a Georgian, born in 1879; his family name was Djughashvili, Stalin being his revolutionary name. His father was a shoemaker who worked in Tiflis. Like Lenin and Trotsky, Stalin had been a revolutionist all his life. He joined the Social Democrats when he was nineteen, and became a Bolshevik soon after the split in 1903. He was imprisoned often, exiled six times to Siberia, whence he escaped five times. In February, 1917, when

the first revolution came, he was in a remote place above the Arctic Circle, whiling away his last term of exile. He returned immediately to Petrograd as soon as the freedom of all political prisoners was announced, and from then on was in the midst of revolution and of the Bolshevik Party. He was never a brilliant speaker or writer; he was a patient, hard-working and clever organizer. When he was made General Secretary of the Party in 1922, after serving as Commissar of Nationalities in the first Sovnarkom, he had the authority to appoint and dismiss men and to move them from one position or place to another. He and Trotsky were very different and did not like each other.

They disagreed on important questions. Trotsky, impatient and ruthless, wanted to end the N.E.P. at once, to increase industry and to turn all the peasants' holdings into great collective farms; he wanted to work, through the Comintern, for world revolution, for he believed, as Lenin had often said, that no one country could be socialist while the rest of the world was capitalist. Stalin, seeing no chance of world revolution, and being far less familiar with the rest of the world than Trotsky and the other leading Bolsheviks were, thought it was better to build socialism in Russia first — when the time was ripe. He was as ruthless as Trotsky but very patient. Both were devoted followers of Lenin, but now there was no Lenin to guide them and reconcile them. Both were powerful men; because of his position, Stalin was able to remove his enemies and to surround himself with friends. Of the two, he proved to be the stronger, the more persistent, and the abler politician.

When Trotsky saw this, he made the mistake of starting an opposition and holding secret meetings, with all the old revolutionary techniques. He appeared, therefore, as the creator of a split in the Party, a breaker of its cherished unity. A year after Lenin's death, Stalin, with a majority of the Central Committee to support him, was able to remove Trotsky as Commissar for War. Later, Trotsky was expelled from the Politburo, then from the Party, then exiled to Central Asia. In 1928, four years after

Lenin's death, he was banished from the Soviet Union, which he had labored so mightily to create, and never returned to it. Stalin remained in power and took Lenin's place as the ruler of Russia. In the Union of Soviet Republics, the people still had no part in the choice of their ruler; Party quarrels and Party preferences were only guessed at outside the Kremlin walls.

The struggle for power, so briefly outlined here, was an ugly one, and the least admirable part was what followed Trotsky's defeat and banishment. Not content with these, his enemies destroyed his reputation, rewrote and falsified history in order to prove that he had always been an enemy of Lenin and of the Revolution. No one is more vilified and hated now in Russia than the man who led the first Soviet in 1905, who was chairman of the powerful Petrograd Soviet in 1917, who carried out the October Revolution, who organized the Red Army and who, shoulder to shoulder with Lenin, established the U.S.S.R.

After this one danger of a rift within the Party had passed, its unity was stronger than ever. Stalin, like Lenin, feared a split more than anything else. Having formed the Bolshevik Party by a historic split, they knew that it was easily done and knew, too, how easily Russians became divided and confused, as the Mensheviks and, indeed, all the other socialist parties had become. Only the unity of the Party could save the Revolution. "The Party is a united fighting force," said its charter, "bound by conscious iron proletarian discipline. The Party is strong through its unity, its singleness of will and singleness of action, which allows no deviation from the program, no breach of Party discipline, and no formation of factions within the Party."

Soviet Socialism

WHEN STALIN was sure of his position as Lenin's successor, he went ahead with the building of socialism in Russia. The New Economic Policy (under which private business and farming were flourishing) was only an emergency measure; the Com-

munists did not want or expect it to last any longer than it was needed. It had helped to restore the people, after the devastation of the Civil War, nearly to the kind of life they had known before 1917. Now it was time to drop it and get on with the Revolution. "Nepmen," as private traders or manufacturers were called, were taxed unmercifully, found every sort of difficulty in their way and were persecuted by the press and by public opinion (which was formed by the press) until life was no longer worth living. Then their property was taken from them and finally, if they could not flee, as the nobility had done, they were sent to prison and exile. By 1930 all private industry and trade was ended.

The Communists wanted all the working people to have everything they needed. Up to now, only a very few people had what they needed. Much, much more food and clothing, fuel and tools, houses and schools, hospitals, roads and railroads, and the machinery to produce all these things quickly and abundantly, must be had. If a government owns all the means of production, it can give these things to the people. That was the aim of socialism; that had been the aim of the October Revolution.

In 1928 the Soviet Union astonished the world by doing something that no government had ever done before. It published a plan for the whole economy of the country for the next five years. It was called the "Piatiletka" — the Five-Year Plan. The Plan stated just how much food must be produced, how much iron, gold, coal and other minerals must be mined, how many factories must be built, and what they must produce.

This was not the first plan that the Communists had made. Lenin had made such plans from the beginning but had been unable to carry them out. "Socialism," he had said, "is the Soviet power plus electrification;" and again, "One hundred thousand tractors in our villages spell socialism." He had planned to build power plants along Russia's many rivers and to give the people everything that the most advanced capitalist countries had, and more. Before the Five-Year Plan was made, work had begun on

a huge dam, at that time the largest in the world, below the rapids of the Dnieper; it was to provide electric power and irrigation to that part of the country. The ground was broken for a great industrial city at the foot of the Ural Mountains, which contain vast amounts of iron and almost every other mineral; a coal-mining center was started in the Kuznetsk Basin in Western Siberia, near the sources of the Ob and the Yenisei rivers. In 1920 the State Planning Commission (the "Gosplan") had been set up. The Five-Year Plan was just what Lenin wanted and what Trotsky had called for a year or two before.

Before the Revolution, most of the machinery used in Russia had been bought in other countries and most of the great industries were run by foreigners. Now, the Soviet Union wanted to be completely self-sufficient. First of all, then, it must make the machines that make machines; that is, before the people could have harvesters and tractors and trucks and locomotives, they must have the factories and the machinery to produce them. That sort of industry is called heavy industry; light industry is the kind that makes the final product people can use. Heavy industry turns out things manufacturers use, that are called producers' goods; light industry turns out things everyone uses, that are called consumers' goods. The first Five-Year Plan called for heavy industry, therefore, and foreign help was needed to start with. European and American engineers were invited and paid well to build steel mills, power plants, oil refineries, chemical plants and factories. These were not concentrated around Leningrad and Moscow and Ukraine, as industries had been hitherto; but they were built in all parts of the country, wherever the raw materials were found. Industrial cities raised their smoking chimneys in the clear air of Siberia, in the Far East, in the steppes of Central Asia, in the steep valleys of Turkmenia and Georgia.

One of the foremost purposes of the Communists was to educate every citizen of the Union, to teach every Samoyed fisherman, every Mongol herdsman to read and write. Now still fur-

ther education was desperately needed, for the herdsman must learn to run a tractor and the Turkish girl — who had never appeared in public without the black garment that covered her from head to foot — must learn to work in a textile factory, with her eyes and hands free. Thousands of skilled workers, engineers, scientists and mechanics were needed; so schools and colleges were built and equipped for them. Meanwhile many of the engineers and scientists, who had been educated before the Revolution, offered their services to the new government.

Geologists and explorers were sent in all directions, from the Arctic to the Caspian, from the Baltic to the Pacific coasts, to find new mineral, coal and iron deposits, to plan new crops and factories. The enormous country, one sixth of the earth's land, held nearly everything that man needs for industry, as well as abundant forests, farmland, grazing land, rivers, and warm country where cotton, fruits, sugar cane and tea can be grown. To have all this under their control, to develop and use, was as exciting a thing as ever happened to any group of men on this earth. The planners, the Communists, and the Comsomols, who had a large part in carrying out the Plan, set themselves with exaltation to its fulfillment.

It was carried out in a truly Russian way — a violent and ruthless way. Just as Peter the Great had pulled and hauled his nobles into modern ways, trampling under his feet multitudes of workmen; so Stalin and his Party pulled and hauled the great majority of the people up toward the level of other great countries, regardless of their suffering and hardships, trampling under foot, in this case, multitudes of peasants. Until socialism was established, Communists considered themselves at war; the war was a civil war, a class war, and at this time their enemies were the peasants.

For the peasants owned land and loved their land. They were bourgeois, not proletarians; they were individualists, and most of them were conservative and ignorant. Many of them had prospered because of the extra land they had taken during the Revolution, and they were, therefore, all the more eager to keep

the land and to develop it. They were still the vast majority of the people and nothing could be done without them, since they produced all the food there was. They were the only ones who had ever defeated Lenin: it was their rebellion that made him retreat from socialism and adopt the N.E.P.

Now socialism was on the march again and the peasants still stood in the way, obstinate, patient, slow, as they had always been. The Plan depended on them, for more factories meant more cities and more workmen to feed; the foreign machinery and technical help that were needed must be paid for with something foreigners wanted, and they had always wanted Russian grain. At any moment, therefore, the peasants might turn the Plan to naught by refusing to raise enough grain.

So Stalin and the men he had kept with him in the Politburo decided the time had come to socialize the land and the peasants. The Five-Year Plan stated that at least one third of the nation's farmland must be divided into large collective farms ("kolkhozes") during those five years. This meant that the peasants must give up their land, their tools and their animals to the kolkhoz, which would be run by a committee elected by themselves and directed by a government expert. With all their little fields thrown together into farms of hundreds or thousands of acres, plowed and sown and harvested by machines, more and better food could undoubtedly be raised with far less labor. Besides, since they were to be under government control, like all other industries, the government could determine what and how much each farm would produce.

Lenin said once that the only peasants the Communists could count on were the landless ones, the very poorest; he had begun, soon after the Revolution, to set these against the richer ones, with the purpose of starting a class war among them. The poor ones had been favored in every way and were now, therefore, on the side of the Communists and eager to form collectives, for they had everything to gain in so doing. Some of the "middle" peasants were also willing, but almost none of those who had enough

to live on wanted to give up their precious animals and the land which, at last, was theirs, for an experiment that they were very doubtful about. Collectivization went very slowly.

So the Communists, with the help of the poorest peasants, began to wage a war on those who refused to be collectivized. Rich and grasping peasants, who loaned money at high interest to their neighbors or employed them at beggarly wages, were called "mir eaters," or "kulaks" which means fists. But now, anyone who owned two horses or cows, who had worked hard and well and built himself a decent house, or who had bought and cultivated so much land that he must hire an extra man at harvest time, was called a kulak, even though he might be the best farmer and the kindest man in his village. In the second year of the Plan, Stalin announced that all kulaks must be "liquidated": that is, done away with. Bands of Communists, most of them Comsomols, came to the villages, turned the kulaks out of their houses, and took all that they owned, all that they had worked so desperately hard for. The most rebellious were shot; others were given miserable land beyond the boundaries of the new collectives (which they were not allowed to join) and hundreds of thousands of families were packed into cattle cars, no matter what the weather, and sent to forced labor camps or concentration camps in the north. About a million families were so liquidated; a million of the best and most industrious farmers.

Then the other peasants were either persuaded or driven to pool their land and animals and to form collectives. Seeing what had happened to the kulaks they could no longer hope to prosper alone, so they gave in. But they fought back, as they always had, with any means in their power, and at that time the food supply was still in their power. Most of them came into the collectives empty-handed. Rather than give up their animals — the scraggy horses that drew their plows, the cows and the pigs that fed them — they killed the animals and ate them. In 1929 and 1930 half the farm animals in Russia were killed and it took ten years to replace them.

In Ukraine and on the lower Volga, where the deep, rich earth had enabled the peasants to live comfortably and well, the resistance was strongest and the war most ruthless. The government demanded more and more grain and the farmers sowed less and less. In 1931 the government took what it had demanded, even when it left no food for the peasants and no seed for the next year. A famine followed whose victims have never been numbered, for no foreign observers were allowed to enter that region and the censored press never mentioned a famine. But it is believed that millions died of hunger, while many more were driven from their homes, to beg along the roads or the railways and to pick up any work that would keep them alive.

By 1932 the war was won; the Communists were victorious. Not one third but two thirds of all the cultivated land was collectivized and the Second Five-Year Plan, which began in 1933, finished the work, bringing all but a few isolated farms under the new system. The work on all the kolkhozes was done by tractors and harvesters that belonged to the government and were kept at tractor stations that could be easily reached by several farms. Communists and G.P.U. men were attached to these stations and so had complete control of the farms the tractors served. The food supply for the whole country was now assured and the government could go ahead with its plans. Besides, the peasant was now far less a bourgeois than he had been and more like a proletarian: he no longer owned land; he received wages.

This was such a far-reaching, drastic change and such a hard-fought victory that it is often called the third revolution. Until it was accomplished the dictatorship of the proletariat could have no real power.

The new farms were far better than the old ones. In place of the little holdings of the peasants, with their thin crops, divided by weedy ridges, wide fields stretched away to the horizon, deeply plowed by tractors and covered with rich grain. In place of the dirty, small shed behind the peasant's house, big dairy barns and hay barns, piggeries and poultry houses appeared.

Schools, hospitals and theaters rose up beside them; radios and movies came to the villages; running water and electricity seemed like miracles to peasants who remembered only wells and candles.

The peasant, indeed, was no longer a peasant, but a collective farmer, a "kolkhoznik," whose children might become engineers or scientists or even Party members and run the country. The farmers were paid a wage, according to the number of "labor days" each one gave to the collective; a percentage of the crop was paid to the state and a part was put away for seed. The farm had to pay for the use of the machinery the state provided, and had various other obligations. When all these had been met, the remainder of the crop — about a third — was divided among the farmers and could be sold by them, either to the government or in the local markets.

Later, because they were discontented with their share of the produce, the Second Plan allowed each family to use, as its own, an acre or two of land around or near its house, and to own a cow or two, a few sheep and pigs. They could raise vegetables or fruit or honey and sell them at government markets. These little homesteads, as well as the great collectives, prospered and added to the food supply. Greater crops were raised, during the Second Plan, than ever before in Russian history.

Meanwhile the well-to-do farmers, who had been turned out of their homes, were taking part in the Plans. Since the beginning of the Revolution, an ever-increasing stream of political prisoners had gone to concentration or labor camps. Anyone who disagreed with the government — priests, bourgeois, revolutionists who had belonged to other parties, Nepmen and kulaks — went into a worse exile than ever existed under the Empire; for the Soviets cared little whether their prisoners lived or died, and, indeed, preferred to have them die. But now, when so much needed to be done, prisoners were used for work, especially work that no one else would do. The state police (now called the G.P.U.) became a great industrial enterprise, employing millions

of forced workers. They were used in the northern forests, for lumber was a valuable export and could be used to pay for foreign machinery. They were made to build roads and railroads, to dig canals, to build mining camps and to mine gold in the Far East, exposed to every sort of hardship; they built cities and factories.

The very few people who have escaped from such imprisonment tell a dreary tale of conditions far worse than those in Tsarist days: overwork, underfeeding, crowding in filthy barracks, exposure to extremes of heat and cold, hopeless misery. As more labor was needed, more prisoners were supplied. The G.P.U. arrested and condemned people as the emperors' police had done: a knock at a door in the dead of night, a search, arrest with no reason given, detention, questioning and sentence; all behind closed doors. Sometimes the prisoner's family was told where they could take packages of food and clothing for him; sometimes they received a brief letter from a distant camp; sometimes they never knew what became of him, or her.

During the period of the Plans, great numbers of bourgeois experts — professors, scientists and engineers who had been working for the government — were sent to the labor camps, accused of "wrecking" or of sabotage, which means hindering or injuring in any way the work in which they were engaged. These men had been very useful to the Soviets, but now the young, Marxist-educated experts were coming out of the colleges, and it was decided to liquidate the bourgeois, as the kulaks had been liquidated. A generation of highly trained and learned men disappeared at that time.

Such were the deep shadows cast by the towering peaks of the Five-Year Plans: the cost, which the Communists believed to be necessary, of establishing Marxian socialism.

In spite of widespread tragedy, in spite of waste and haste and many failures due to ignorance, the Plans went on and began to accomplish their purpose. Tractors and harvesters, trucks and

cars and airplanes poured out of the new factories; and young men and women poured out of the schools and technical colleges, eager to take their part in the great work.

It was good to be young and to be given a vast plan and a purpose and a great beautiful country to carry it out in. Life was hard, for the war of the collectives had cut down the supply of meats and fats and the drive for heavy industry meant there was a great lack of all the little things people need — clothes and shoes, hammers and nails, pots and pans — that are called consumers' goods. Wherever the problems were hardest, the young people, the Comsomols, were thrown in to lead and inspire and work harder than anyone else. They were given, in their teens, positions of responsibility that trained them as raw recruits are trained by battle. Before their eyes was the vision of the new life of abundance and joy, the marvels that socialism would produce. These were the children of the Revolution, brought up in its schools: they were trained in Marxism and only in Marxism; they were taught that economic conditions cause all the variations of human experience and they believed that what they were doing would change human nature and make a new and a happier man. They were immensely proud that they were, for the first time, building a socialist state, that theirs was the first proletarian land; and they believed, with all their hearts, that they were leading the world toward the same goal. Probably no other country has ever given so many people, at any one time, the joy of selfless devotion to the common good.

Such was the light that illumined the towering peaks of the Plans; and both the light and the shadow belonged inextricably to a history so often shaped by violence and contrast.

By the time the Third Plan was under way — that is, in a little over ten years, from 1928 to 1938 — Russian industry was producing eight times as much as in 1913. Six times as much coal, four times as many minerals, twenty times as much electric power, fifteen times as many chemicals were at the service of the

people. From being a backward farming country, dependent on others, the Soviet Union became one of the foremost industrial countries, second only to the United States in output. Like the United States, it was blessed with almost all the earth's resources, and its enormous territory and large population gave it advantages over any other land.

The Soviet Union now felt independent in still another and a very important way. Communists believed there was and always must be a deadly enmity between capitalism and socialism; they taught their young people that their country was encircled by hostile nations. They gave a large place, therefore, in their heavy industries to armament: factories for making tanks, airplanes, guns and other war materials were placed at strategic points, and industrial centers were built in the Urals and in Siberia, where they would be safe in case of invasion from the west.

In 1931 Japan invaded Manchuria. In 1933 Hitler rose to power in Germany. The Second and Third Plans increased the production of armaments.

A great victory was won on the educational "front" (for war terms were used in the great effort of these Plans) during those ten years. The Communists had always planned to educate every citizen of the Union; but until the First Plan went into effect, there were not enough teachers or buildings or books for more than about half the children and the illiterate adults. In 1914 less than half the population could read or write; after the Civil War a little more than half could. Among all the different peoples living within the Union some not only could not read; their languages had never even been written, for they had no alphabet. With patient labor alphabets were made; books and textbooks were translated into dozens of languages, and millions of cheap copies were printed so that everyone might have them. Every tribe and race was encouraged to cherish its own literature, its arts, music and dance. The theater was used everywhere as an educational instrument as well as a pleasure: troupes of Comsols went to the farms, the factories, to Mongol and Turkish

urts, to the shy tribes of the far north, and dramatized the new way of life. In 1940 nearly ninety per cent of the whole population could read and write, and the natural gifts of all the Soviet peoples flourished as never before.

Life became a little easier and a little pleasanter. There were fine new apartments, in the 1930's, for some of the workers; there were many things of which everyone could be proud. The great Dnieper Dam was opened in 1932, with national rejoicing. The rocky rapids, past which the early princes had dragged their laden boats and around which Catherine and her courtiers had driven, the marshy rapids which had sheltered the Cossacks in the camp, were now hidden beneath a beneficent sheet of water. The paved streets and the magnificent subway of Moscow delighted the hearts of its citizens and of admiring visitors from the provinces. There were schools and colleges for all; free medical service for all; old age and accident and maternity insurance. The splendid palaces on the steep, sunny shores of Crimea were rest homes and vacation resorts for the people. And everything was done for children. There were day nurseries and parks and playgrounds and schools, children's theaters and children's palaces. These palaces were in the cities and the large towns; they were usually houses of the former nobility or the rich bourgeoisie and were now filled with children who came there to paint and dance and act plays and give parties and have meetings. The emperors' palaces near Leningrad, with their splendid parks and gardens, were given over to the children.

There were sports, too, hitherto unknown except to a few: team games, such as Western people play, swimming and races and track sports. And on every anniversary of the Revolution and the other new holidays of the new nation, there were public festivities with long parades of the army and other organizations, with banners and dances and fireworks and, in place of icons, huge pictures of Lenin and Stalin.

Here was a new, vital and robust Russia, toughened by pro-

longed hardships, and strengthened by almost incredible suffering.

The Purge

MARXISTS GLORIFY revolution. They believe that no class willingly gives up its power and wealth, and that, therefore, changes can be made only by the violent overthrow of one class by another.

Other philosophers of history believe that changes can be made by peaceful means, that men have willingly given up power and have changed social conditions through their own laws and governments, and that revolution is necessary only when an outworn form of government clings stubbornly to what it owns and represses all criticism and all desire for change.

The Russian autocracy was probably the most stubborn of all outworn forms of government ever known; it held out for a hundred years against every kind of appeal for change and growth—from the humblest and most reasonable petition to terrorism. Hence the violence of the revolution which finally overthrew it: a violence like that of a river that is held too long behind a dam and, when it finally bursts through, destroys all that stands in its way and floods a far wider area than it covers in its normal course.

Whether one believes in revolution or not, the fact remains that the few violent revolutions that have occurred in human history follow a certain pattern. After the first outburst, they return, in greater or less degree, to the forms that they once destroyed. After the French Revolution, Napoleon came to power and then the brother of the very king whom the revolution had destroyed. After the rebellious English had cut off the head of Charles I, they invited Charles II back to the empty throne. This does not mean that nothing had been gained; on the contrary, the purpose had usually been accomplished and life could become normal again. To follow our former simile: when the river is freed of its obstacle and the pent-up waters

have flowed off, it runs again along its usual course and between its accustomed banks. For it is as difficult to hurry human growth as it is to hurry, except for a short interval, the current of a river.

The Russian Revolution developed in much the same way. Many of the drastic changes made in the beginning were dropped as the people struggled up out of ruin to a sounder economy and a more secure life.

In the first flush of revolution, soldiers' committees elected and controlled their officers. Titles, medals and fine uniforms were thrown out, as belonging to Tsarist days. Workers' committees ran the factories. Children controlled the schools, which were run on very experimental lines. But, when the army had to fight, soldiers' committees were abolished and rigid discipline was restored. Later, titles, medals, uniforms, schools and privileges for officers came back. When factories had to produce quickly and abundantly, workers' control was abolished, and managers and directors appointed by the Party ran the factories. When children must be educated to be good Communists, school discipline was restored, with examinations, marks, reports and the old standards of study and behavior.

The home, too, was restored to favor. Communal living was found to be less happy and less productive than family life. Respect and love for parents was encouraged again; divorce was harder to get and marriage and parenthood were held up as praiseworthy.

Patriotism came into favor again and was encouraged to a greater extent than ever before. This was partly because it was obvious that Japan on one side and Germany on the other were preparing for conquest and that Russia might shortly be fighting for its life. Bolshevism had been international: members of the same class were supposed to be brothers, whatever nation they might belong to, while Russians of different classes must necessarily be enemies. But now Russia was spoken of as the "motherland"; and, to the natural love of country was added de-

votion to the first socialist state. Russians, who had always been conscious of being behind other nations in many ways, now took an overweening pride in being ahead, and comparisons were drawn, to their own advantage, between themselves and citizens of other lands.

They began to be proud of their history. For the Bolsheviks, history began in October, 1917; nothing else was worthy of mention, except as a dark background for the shining facts of the present. But, in the 1930's, great virtues were found in the past, both in men and in events. Peter the Great, the proletarian Tsar, was quite properly held up to admiration, for he would have rejoiced in Russia's rapid industrialization, the goal of all his dreams. Alexander Nevsky was honored, too, for his defense of his country from the Teutonic Knights, and the old generals, Suvorov and Kutuzov, for their victories. Even Ivan the Terrible was found admirable for his war against the boyars and his appeal, as a young man, to the people. Moving pictures were made of their lives and exploits and shown in Russia and abroad.

The socialist ideal of "equal work and equal pay" also disappeared with the need for fast and abundant production. Workers were paid on the piece-work system; that is, not by the hour or the day, but according to the amount they produced. Rewards were offered for increased output: medals and honors and bonuses, or a trip to Moscow or Crimea. A foreman was paid more than a workman, a manager more than a foreman; the head of a great industry, such as the steel or lumber industry, was paid, in proportion to the wages of an unskilled workman, about the same salary as the head of such an industry in any capitalist country. The Communist official no longer received the pay of a skilled workman, as he had in Lenin's day; besides a good salary, he had the use of an automobile, perhaps a private car or even a private train on the railway, a fine house in Crimea or the Caucasus for a holiday, and a country house of his own. There was still a sad lack of ordinary goods and houses and food;

the Party man or the industrialist could be sure of a comfortable apartment, enough food, and comforts that the workman could not dream of.

Artists also were well paid, for the Russians have delighted in the arts ever since Tsar Alexei and his son gave them free play. Dancers, movie stars, poets, actors and musicians were highly paid. Writers and composers were celebrating the new state. Theaters, operas, ballets and movies were open to all the people at low prices.

Property, according to a decree in the 1930's, could be owned and inherited. People could save money, buy government bonds, which yielded a high interest, and live on unearned income. Servants could be hired to do the housework or any heavy task; and again a minority lived in comfort. One thing, however, could not be done in the Soviet Union: no one could live on another man's labor. No one could run a factory, a shop, or a farm, employ other people and take in the profits. This was exploitation and this was not resumed, with the exception of the forced labor of millions of political prisoners. People owned only what they could use themselves. A servant was paid for his daily work, but no one made any money out of him. A farmer could own bees and poultry and pigs and sell them and their produce, but he could not hire another man to tend them for him, for in that case he would be profiting by another's labor. Nevertheless, under the new system, the privileged and the underprivileged, the rich and the poor, found their places again.

The government, more noticeably than anything else, had returned to the old forms. This was natural, for the Communists had set up a new society and had nothing to copy or imitate. It is hard to create a new government, especially one that was undertaking more than any government had ever done. It was natural, therefore, for them to use the powers and the habits that everyone was accustomed to. Just as they lived, bodily, between the thick old walls of the Kremlin, so they acted within the forms and through the accustomed channels of autocracy.

The rule of the Communist Party, with Stalin at its head, was as autocratic as that of the Tsars. It was a highly centralized but far more efficient bureaucracy than the imperial government had been. Far more people participated in it, however, and the people, through the Soviets, had more contact with it than ever before.

The Communist secret police made the Tsarist police look like children; for they were far more numerous, more efficient and more ruthless. They were everywhere, in uniform and plainclothes. The Soviet citizen who accepted with joy and implicit faith the Party Line, looked upon the G.P.U. with no more terror than the citizen of any other country who welcomes the protection his government gives him; but others looked with dread at the grim G.P.U. building on Lubianka Square in Moscow, for into its prisons hundreds and sometimes thousands of people disappeared each year and were never heard of again or perhaps wrote occasionally from far-distant camps, whence they might or might not emerge.

The censorship of the new government far outdid that of the emperors. The old censorship merely told people what they must *not* write: if writers could avoid the forbidden subjects or opinions, or veil them under a fiction, they could write what they pleased. But the new censorship told them what they *must* write as well as what they must not. All art, science and history must express the Marxist point of view; even music, dancing or clowning in a circus could be criticized as showing bourgeois rather than proletarian feeling, and the artist must either change his ways or fall into disfavor which, if he persisted in his error, would end his career. Popular opinion must also follow the Party Line: a play or novel might at first be praised by the critics and widely read; then a hidden deviation might be found in it and, overnight, praise must turn to condemnation.

The positive side of censorship is known as propaganda. It is the guiding and directing of people's minds toward one purpose and along one road. The Communist Party used this new activity

of government with great skill, using all the modern means of communication — the press, the radio, the moving picture — to accomplish its will. The old, deep-seated distrust of the people and of their free opinion was as obvious in the new state as in the old.

To some people it seemed as if the old foundations of Russia were as firm as ever: Nationalism, with a new emphasis and passion; Orthodoxy, now meaning Marxism; Autocracy, the rule of the Party and its leader. Nicholas II, with all his family, had been shot during the Civil War; since then two great autocrats had ruled over Russia — Lenin and Stalin.

How was this new autocracy accepted by a people who had for so long striven for freedom? It is very difficult to tell, in a country so closely and ruthlessly controlled by its government. Undoubtedly many people rejoiced in it, for it gave them more freedom and a better life than they had ever dreamed of before. Undoubtedly many, and especially the intelligentsia and old revolutionists who did not agree with the Communists — if any such remained outside prison — were bitterly opposed but dared not speak or act. It is hard to tell even from the reports of foreigners who were free to speak, because their reports were so different.

In the 1930's, foreigners were comparatively free to travel in Russia. There had been, of course, a great curiosity to see this new experiment in living; many people went there and many wrote books about it. Some hailed it as a new and better civilization and lavished praise upon it. Others, who believed in socialism and went to Russia as to the promised land, were disappointed in what they saw and turned against it as violently as they had once desired it. Some young people from other lands, full of idealism, went there to live, married Russians and worked for Communism. Some turned bitterly against it because of their experiences there; others remained. Travelers went through Siberia, recording the astonishing work of education that had been done among the ignorant primitive peoples there, the

opening of the Arctic Ocean to navigation, the experiments in growing grain and vegetables above the Arctic Circle, the great collective farms in Central Asia, the freedom of women in the old Turkish provinces. The books these foreigners wrote, many of them vivid personal experiences, if balanced against one another, give the foreign reader, who has no first-hand knowledge, excellent observation of Russia under Stalin's rule. Russian books — those published in the country, which must be favorable, and those written by people who, for one reason or another, have left or escaped and are therefore unfavorable — can also be balanced against one another and give some idea of how Russians themselves felt.

It was obvious, however, to the whole world in the 1930's that the much publicized unanimity was not real but, in some way, forced.

Just after the Second Five-Year Plan started, in 1934, a Communist of high rank, a member of the Politburo and a close friend of Stalin — Sergei Kirov — was murdered. The murder seemed to be only the result of a personal grudge, but it was taken, by Stalin, as the signal for a far-reaching purge, a sweeping out of all doubtful Party members, of all who might disagree with or oppose him.

Purge is a word that has taken on new political meaning with the existence of totalitarian states under the leadership of a party. In the Communist Party, even in its smallest units, it was the custom to bring its members up for examination at stated times, to see whether their thoughts, words and actions were up to Party standards. If his loyalty or devotion was doubted, a member was dropped; if his record was clear, all was well. This custom was observed in all Party organizations; in Moscow itself one of the most powerful parts of the government was the Central Control Commission, which kept an eye on everyone below Stalin himself. A Party that planned and controlled the lives of one hundred and seventy million people could tolerate no division or

wavering in its leadership, and no opposition. In Germany, earlier in the same year, 1934, there had been a purge of the Nazi Party, in which thousands of members had been killed or had disappeared.

After Kirov's murder, a hue and cry was raised that reminds one only of Ivan the Terrible's or Peter the Great's frantic fear of treason. Between 1934 and 1938 hundreds of thousands of men and women were arrested and shot as traitors, were imprisoned or exiled or simply disappeared. Among them were almost all the "Old Bolsheviks" — those who belonged to the Party before 1917 — especially those who had chosen to go abroad and work in exile, for there was still ill feeling between those men and the ones who had stayed and done the underground work at home. Stalin was one of the latter. Among the exiles, of course, were the close friends and comrades of Lenin, who had himself been an exile but who stood above all criticism. The men who were now shot, imprisoned or exiled were the men who had made the October Revolution and established the U.S.S.R. They had held responsible positions as ambassadors, commissars, presidents of republics, members of the Central Committee of the Party or the Politburo.

This experience, too, belongs to the pattern of violent revolution: the very men who give their lives to producing it are often carried away and destroyed by the forces they themselves have released. In the French Revolution, the leaders were destroyed and the exhausted nation was taken over by Napoleon, who had very little part in making the Revolution. Lenin who, like all the Communist leaders, had studied the technique of revolution and held the French Revolution up as both a bad and a good example, knew this danger well. He was ruthless in excluding from the Party and in vilifying anyone who disagreed with him, but he never killed men merely for their opposition and he said before he died, "Do not let blood flow between you." Now blood flowed freely and all the prominent Communists, except those who were perfectly loyal to Stalin, were destroyed by the violence they had

once so gladly used and that was now beyond their control.

In France all important leaders had perished. In Russia one survived — Stalin, with his followers — and a man of steel * he must have been, for he had lived through Tsarist persecution, the two revolutions of 1917, the Civil War and all the turbulent years since, and was still strong enough to destroy any man who might oppose him.

The purge was dramatized in three “trials” held in 1936, 1937 and 1938. They were not trials in the usual sense, for the defendants had already been tried in secret; they were, rather, exhibitions, in which those of the accused who were willing to do so confessed their guilt and were sentenced. The trials were held in the hall of a fine palace in Moscow, which had once been a noblemen’s club and was now used by the trades unions. In relays, from all over Russia, people were brought to see and to hear the humiliation and the condemnation of the men who had once led them, whose words and writings they had once obeyed without question. For the men who confessed and were publicly tried were the best-known of the Communist leaders. The trials remain one of the astonishing mysteries of history, which may some day be explained, if some day freedom of speech is allowed in Russia.

For, one after another, these revolutionists, members of “a Party of iron, tempered in the art of conflict,” rose and confessed at length that they had plotted to kill Stalin, that they had killed Kirov, that they meant to take over the government with the aid of Germany and of Japan, to whom they had offered Russian territory in payment. They stated calmly that they were in the pay of those governments, had spied for them and turned over important information to them, had tried to wreck industries and slow down their production. They said that Trotsky, who had found refuge first in Norway and then in Mexico, was at the bottom of the whole conspiracy and that they had been in constant communication with him and with his son.

In the first trial, in August, 1936, sixteen men were tried, the

* *Stal means steel.*

most prominent being Kamenev and Zinoviev, old comrades of Lenin's, members of his first Politburo in 1917 and active ever since in many different positions, Zinoviev having been the head of the Comintern for several years. The trial continued for days, in which the audience listened to long accusations by the Prosecutor, Vishinsky, and long confessions of amazing guilt by all the sixteen accused. The following is a brief example of what was said:

Kamenev: "We were guided by our boundless hatred of the leaders of the Party and the country and by a thirst for the power with which we were once so closely associated and from which we were cast aside by the course of historical development. . . . The conspiracy took shape in 1932 as an organized union which had no platform whatever and which set itself the aim of seizing power by disorganizing the government by terroristic means, by assassinating Stalin as well as his nearest comrades-in-arms."

Vishinsky: "What name shall be given to the statements you wrote in 1933, expressing loyalty to the Party? Deception?"

Kamenev: "No, worse than deception."

Vishinsky: "Perfidy?"

Kamenev: "Worse."

Vishinsky: "Worse than deception. Worse than perfidy. Find the word. Treason?"

Kamenev: "You have found it."

Vishinsky: "Your struggle against the leaders of the Party and government was guided by motives of a personal base character? By the thirst for personal power?"

Kamenev: "Yes, by the thirst for power of our group. We resorted to methods as low and vile as the aim which we set ourselves."

Vishinsky: "Has this anything to do with social ideals?"

Kamenev: "As much as revolution has to do with counter-revolution."

Vishinsky: "That is, you are on the side of counter-revolution?"

Kamenev: "Yes."

Vishinsky: "Consequently you clearly perceive that you are fighting against socialism?"

Kamenev: "We clearly perceive that we are fighting against the leaders of the Party and the government, who are leading the country to socialism."

Vishinsky: "Thereby you are fighting against socialism as well, aren't you?"

Kamenev: "You are drawing the conclusion of a historian and a prosecutor."

The trial ended with a speech, hours long, by the Prosecutor, Vishinsky, in which he poured forth upon the accused men the abuse which was a part of Marxist method, for Marx himself had used it in speaking of anyone who disagreed with him and his followers have always done the same. "A contemptible, insignificant, impotent group of traitors and murderers," Vishinsky said, "tried to trample with their blood-stained feet upon the most fragrant flowers of our socialist garden. These mad dogs of capitalism tried to tear limb from limb the best of the best of our Soviet land . . ." Then they were all sentenced to be shot.

In January, 1937, there was another such trial, of seventeen men, among whom Radek, one of the most brilliant exponents of Marxism, Sokolnikov, former Commissar of Finance, and Piatakov, Assistant Commissar of Heavy Industry, were the most prominent. There were the same accusations, the same extraordinary confessions of wrecking the industries these men had given their lives to build, of ruining collective farms, of counting on the help of foreign armies, of being the tool of Trotsky, who "has been exposed as an ally of capitalism, as the vilest agent of fascism, as a fomenter of world war . . ." All but four were shot, and the four were sentenced to long prison terms.

In June of that year it was announced that Marshal Tukhachevsky — who had first won fame in the Civil War, was head of the War College and a member of the Supreme Military Council — and seven other leading generals of the Red Army had

been tried in secret and shot. Another member of the Military Council had already killed himself. This trial was a court-martial, held before a military tribunal on which eight other high officers were invited to sit.

In March, 1938, the last of the public "trials" was held. Twenty-one men appeared; among them Bukharin, Lenin's friend and comrade and the philosopher of Communism; Rykov, who had succeeded Lenin as head of the Sovnarkom; a Commissar of Foreign Trade; a Commissar of Finance; a Vice-Commissar of Foreign Affairs; an ambassador; and, curiously enough, Yagoda, Chief of the G.P.U., who had, up to now, conducted the purge. The fact that he was now condemned and shot as a traitor did not affect the arrests and the executions carried out by his orders. (Six of the eight generals who had witnessed the court-martial of Marshal Tukhachévsky were also shot, later.) The twenty-one were sentenced and executed as the others had been. And again history had to be rewritten; all these men's writings must be suppressed, their services to the U.S.S.R. must be left out of Soviet and Party history, in which they must appear only as "hyenas," "mad dogs," "the scum of humanity," and, most bitter epithet of all, "enemies of the people."

The purge shook the country to its depth and also shocked the world. Foreign ambassadors and correspondents were present at the trials: some believed the confessions of the defendants; some doubted or disbelieved them. It was probable that there were conspiracies against Stalin: autocracy invites conspiracy, as had been said long ago about Tsarism. These were powerful men who had made history and could not be expected always to agree with anyone; but that they, who had given their lives to a socialist revolution, should betray it into the hands of such reactionary capitalist countries as Germany or Japan seemed highly unlikely. It was possible that, trained in the iron discipline of Communism, they preferred to give the impression of Party unity even in the face of death. It is possible that they were forced by well-known G.P.U. methods — the threat of death or ruin to their families,

the questioning, for days and nights, by relays of questioners, while the prisoner may not eat or sleep and sometimes may not even sit down — to confess what was not true. It is possible that they were guilty. The trials remain a mystery. But whether the defendants were guilty or innocent, the purge was a blow to Russia's prestige in the eyes of the world and possibly, to its shocked and silent people. For these were Lenin's "holy men, fit to go alive into Paradise." Had he been so unwise in choosing them? What had happened to their revolution, that they should betray it or that it should betray them?

The trials, sensational as they were, concerned only about fifty men. Hundreds of thousands of others were swept away in the purge: shot, imprisoned, sent to labor camps, disappeared. There were, besides, many suicides. The Communist Party lost about a million members; out of seventy-one members of the Central Committee, twenty-one remained; of twenty-one Commissars, only five remained. It can be compared only to the wholesale massacres of Ivan the Terrible. And Stalin, like Ivan, came out of it stronger than ever.

Party unity had been preserved, at tremendous cost; those who survived were Stalin's unquestioning followers. Marx did not believe in the leadership of individuals; he believed that history was made by the struggle of classes and that individuals were merely the spearheads, the peaks, of their class. But now Stalin was exalted as Lenin never had been. His pictures, vastly more than life size, were displayed everywhere, indoors and out, and were carried, like icons, in parades. "Our beloved father, our great leader, the sun of Russia," he was called, in books, in newspapers and in speeches. The cobbler's son from Georgia was the undisputed autocrat of one of the most powerful nations in the world.

Just as there were two systems of government existing side by side in Russia, so there were two states. One was the first socialist state, in which the government owned all the means of production and was responsible for the welfare of all its citizens. The

other was the first totalitarian state; in which one unopposed power directed the lives, actions and thoughts of all its citizens. Both aspects of this great new dual power arrested the attention and disturbed the thought of every other country in the world.



CHAPTER XIX

THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR

IN THE TWENTY-FIVE years from 1914 to 1939 the Russian people had suffered many things: world war and revolution, civil war and famine, class war and famine, the sacrifices demanded by the Five-Year Plans, and the purge. They had hardly recovered from the shock of the purge when worse suffering befell them and greater sacrifice still was demanded of them. For the Second World War in its full fury struck them in June, 1941, and raged for four years over their richest provinces.

Communists have little interest in international wars. They believe them to be, as Lenin said, the inevitable result of capitalism, and they scorn and hate such warfare. Class war and civil war are another matter. These they welcome and encourage; indeed, their only interest in international war is that it may create such misery that class wars may arise from it.

They did all they could to prevent the Second World War. In 1934 Russia joined the League of Nations, although the Communists had very little faith in that attempt of the capitalist nations to avoid war. Their relations with other countries were im-

proving, for nothing succeeds like success, and the astonishing changes produced by the Five-Year Plans had impressed the rest of the world. In 1933 the United States recognized Russia and sent its ambassador finally to Moscow, where its engineers, business men and writers were already familiar visitors. In 1935 Russia made a defensive alliance with France, reminiscent of the alliance before the First World War.

The existence of the Comintern, whose purpose was to incite world revolution; the socialist economy of Russia, whose success might encourage socialism in other countries; the purge, which was revolting both to the ideals and the practice of Western nations; the Communists' hatred of everything bourgeois and capitalist: all these preserved the deep distrust that existed between the Soviet Union and the West. But in spite of this distrust, relations were better, and Foreign Commissar Litvinov's powerful appeals for collective security at the meetings of the League of Nations, his statement that "peace is indivisible," won the respect of all peace-loving people.

There were obvious dangers to peace on all sides. The Japanese had seized Manchuria in 1931; in 1937 they attacked China, worn and impoverished by years of civil war, and waged a cruel and ruthless war of conquest upon that great country. And in Europe, out of the ruins of the First World War, two other totalitarian states had arisen — Italy and Germany, led by two evil-minded men, Mussolini and Hitler.

To what extent and how consciously these two dictators imitated Soviet methods it would be interesting to inquire. The dual nature of the Communist state is very obvious in this connection. For while Litvinov was sincerely pleading for peace and pledging Soviet support for peace in the League of Nations, the Soviet Union itself offered to any ambitious man the example of how a determined minority could seize power in a disturbed country and how it could direct the thoughts and activities of a people. In Italy and Germany there was the same rule of a single party, with a powerful leader; the same repression of any opinion ex-

cept that expressed by the party leaders; the same coarse abuse of any opinion except theirs. There were the huge pictures of Mussolini and Hitler everywhere, as were those of Stalin in Russia; the same parades and banners, the censorship, the use of radio and press for propaganda, and the powerful police force. In these two countries, however, there was no idealism underlying these methods, no vision of ultimate peace, abundance and brotherhood. There was only a passion for personal and national glory, and the ignorant, outworn belief that these can be attained by war and conquest.

Italy was not a powerful country; Mussolini wreaked his ambition upon one of the weakest of nations, Ethiopia, and could be dangerous to the peace of Europe only if he joined forces with another warlike country.

Hitler was another matter. Germany had always been powerful and was dangerous because the Germans are warlike people. Their total defeat in the First World War and the terms imposed upon them by the Treaty of Versailles filled them with shame, hurt pride and vengefulness, and made it possible for Hitler to play upon these feelings and lead them into mad undertakings.

Unfortunately, nations were too selfish, as yet, to work together to preserve peace. The League of Nations did nothing to stop either Japan or Italy in their wars of conquest; therefore Hitler foresaw that nothing would be done to stop him. He built up a great army and air force and, in his book, *Mein Kampf*, announced to the world that the Germans were the only people fit to rule Europe, or, indeed, the world; that he intended to conquer all of Europe and to use its resources and its peoples to serve and enrich the Germans, the "master race." He made no secret of the fact that one of the things he most wanted was the rich Ukraine, which the Germans had already won and lost again, in the First World War. He made no secret, either, of his hatred for Communism. Here was another and more dangerous Napoleon, another of the dreamers who wanted to unite and dominate the continent of Europe, and then the world.

In the spring of 1938 he marched into Austria and made it a part of Germany. It was clear that the next small country he intended to take over was Czechoslovakia, which had fought for its freedom from Austria in the First World War, had been made an independent nation by the Treaty of Versailles, and had justified its struggle by becoming a happy, prosperous and democratic country. It had an alliance with France which promised French help if Czechoslovakia were attacked; and an alliance with the Soviet Union which promised help if, but only if, France also helped. When Hitler threatened Czechoslovakia, as he did in the spring of 1938, Litvinov offered Soviet help; but France and England, without consulting either Czechoslovakia or Russia, feared another catastrophic war and, hoping that Hitler would be satisfied with his latest demand, abandoned Czechoslovakia to him at a meeting in Munich that September. The next spring, in 1939, Hitler took over Czechoslovakia, which could not hope, alone, to withstand the army of such a large country as Germany. Then he turned his eyes toward Poland.

The Soviet leaders were deeply offended by the complete disregard of France and England. They knew that Hitler was a dangerous and bitter enemy. They suspected that the Western nations would not be displeased to see Germany and the Soviet Union in a death struggle; and that, if such a thing happened, no help would come from the West.

In August of that fateful year, 1939, the world was shocked to hear that the new Soviet Foreign Commissar, Molotov, had signed a ten-year non-aggression pact with Hitler; that is, a promise that neither nation would attack the other for ten years. A week later, on the first day of September, Hitler marched into Poland; and two days later France and England, realizing that nothing but the fulfillment of his insane dreams would satisfy him, declared war on Germany. The Second World War was on.

The pact gave Hitler a free hand in western Europe without fear of trouble from Russia; and it gave Russia time to prepare

for war. Stalin and the top Communists knew that Hitler was still their enemy and they expected that war would come in due time. In fact, a strange sort of bloodless war went on between the two enemies, while in words they were professing the greatest friendship. And in this bloodless war, between September, 1939 and June, 1941, the Soviet Union won as much territory as a great victory might have brought it.

The Germans conquered Poland in about a month. Two new weapons, the tank and the airplane, had been tried in the First War and developed since then into the most terrible means of destruction that humanity ever suffered from. War was now made, not on armies alone, but on the whole population of a country. Tanks mowed men down as if they had been standing grain; planes rained death upon the cities. In swiftness, in efficiency, in destruction and cruelty, the German army was very like the Mongol. In seven hundred years, nothing had been done to protect humanity from the infinite suffering that such criminal invasion as this can cause.

The Soviet Union had no desire to see Germany triumphant on its border. As soon as it was clear that Poland would be conquered, the Red Army marched into the unhappy country from the east and took up its stand half way across it. This division (a fourth partition) of Poland had been agreed upon in the non-aggression pact. Russia thus made sure of its share of the spoils and won back a much desired area whose people were mostly Ukrainian and White Russian.

The next thing the Soviet Union did was to take back the Baltic coast, so long desired and so dearly won by Peter and Catherine. Neither Germany nor Russia had agreed to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, as they had had no part in making it and had both suffered by it. The treaty had created three little states — Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania — out of the Baltic coast, when Russia was in the throes of its Civil War. None of the states had more than three million people; only one of them, Lithuania, had ever been an independent state; they were created partly as

buffers against the new Russia. In 1939 the Soviet Union demanded the right to take back the old naval stations along the coast that had belonged to Russia in Tsarist days. None of the three small countries could well refuse anything Russia demanded. In 1940 they were taken over and turned into three Soviet republics. The Baltic coast was won again and Soviet Russia did not mean ever to lose it again.

There was another danger, to Russian eyes, in the west. The Finnish border lay only twenty miles from Leningrad, once the capital and still a great seaport and industrial city, Russia's gate to the west.

The Finns, even under the emperors, had had their own government and a good deal of freedom; they declared their complete independence in December, 1917, and it was confirmed by the Sovnarkom in January, 1918, and recognized in 1920 by the Treaty of Versailles. The Finns are by nature a democratic people, but there were Communists among them. Fierce and bloody civil war raged between Communists and democrats from 1918 to 1920. The Communists were defeated, but Finland, with less than four million people, kept a wary eye on its huge neighbor and former conqueror. A few miles behind its border was a strong line of fortification.

The Soviet Union now demanded from Finland the Karelian Isthmus and a large area beyond it, in exchange for some land farther north. The Finns refused; and the Soviet Union, after the manner of nations, which are apt to take what they want when they can get it, attacked Finland in November, 1939, expecting an easy victory. The Finns fought heroically through a bitterly cold winter, but were forced to surrender in March, 1940. In modern warfare it is the size, not the courage, of a people that counts. Russia took the land it wanted, but left the rest of Finland independent.

In 1940 Hitler repeated the exploits of Napoleon. He conquered Holland, Belgium, France, Denmark and Norway. Italy, under Mussolini, joined him as an ally; in Spain, the Fascist rebel,

Franco, whom Hitler and Mussolini had helped put into power, did not join them in war, but was a silent partner.

In 1941 Hitler overran the Balkans; every country there, excepting Yugoslavia, was either conquered or willingly followed the conqueror. This brought the triumphant German forces farther than Napoleon had ever gone: to the Black Sea and all along Russia's wide frontier.

Yet, after all these victories, Hitler's position was oddly the same as Napoleon's: England, unconquered, remained his deadly enemy; and Russia was very much as it had been under Alexander I, outwardly friendly but a very uncertain quantity. No man could conquer Europe while either of these two opposed him.

In 1940 every man and woman in the Soviet Union was "frozen" to his or her job. No one could leave a factory, a farm, a fishing village or a town without permission. Under the pact with Germany grain and iron and coal were shipped west to strengthen the German armies; but precious machinery and equipment were sent back in exchange. Munitions making was speeded up; tractor plants turned out tanks, and airplanes were made instead of harvesters. In January, 1941, Stalin said, "Russia is totally mobilized." War was expected; and yet, when it came, the shock was terrific.

On June 22nd, 1941, Hitler made the same mistake Napoleon had made on June 17th, 1812. He, too, planned to invade England but thought better of it; his airforce, which darkened the skies of Europe, had been defeated by the Royal Air Force; the British had stood up doggedly to ceaseless bombing and, to Hitler's petulant disappointment, refused to surrender. So, as Napoleon had done, he turned on his other enemy. On a summer Sunday, without any warning, he loosed his engines of war along the whole western border of Russia.

With tanks and armored cars and motor trucks an army can travel twenty or thirty miles a day. Meanwhile those deadly

birds of war, the bombing planes, speed far ahead, destroying railroads and air bases, factories and cities and supply centers. The Germans rolled over the flat frontier from Finland — whose anger over the Russian invasion put it on the enemy's side — and across the Baltic States toward Leningrad; through Poland into the heart of Russia, toward Moscow and Ukraine; from Rumania toward Odessa and the Black Sea. The battle front was two thousand miles long. Hitler's army, like Napoleon's, was swelled by alien and more or less willing allies — Rumanians, Italians, Finns, Spaniards.

The Soviet Union was shocked into action. Stalin, who until May, 1941, had been only the General Secretary of the Party, was made Premier, or chairman of the Sovnarkom, at that time. In June he was made Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army and chairman of the Defense Council, which for the next four years organized the greatest war Russia had ever had to fight. They call it "The Great Patriotic War."

Russia was the first country larger than Germany that had as yet been attacked. It had twice the manpower of its enemy, but it still had less of the things essential to modern war — airplanes, tanks, trucks and railways. Its army could not stand against the Germans. It was forced to treat this new invasion, therefore, as it had treated Napoleon's — with delaying action and scorched earth. Slowly and stubbornly its armies retreated, fighting wherever possible. Grimly the farmers set fire to the fine new barns of the collective farms, and the workmen to the proud factories, unless there was time to dismantle them and send them to the east. The treads of innumerable tanks ground the young crops into the earth as the invading army pressed into Ukraine.

In July the Germans reached Smolensk and were held there for a month; in August they took Novgorod and in November they were close enough to Leningrad to shell it. In September Chernigov fell and in September, too, after a six-weeks' siege, Kiev, still Russia's third-largest city, was taken, and shortly after-

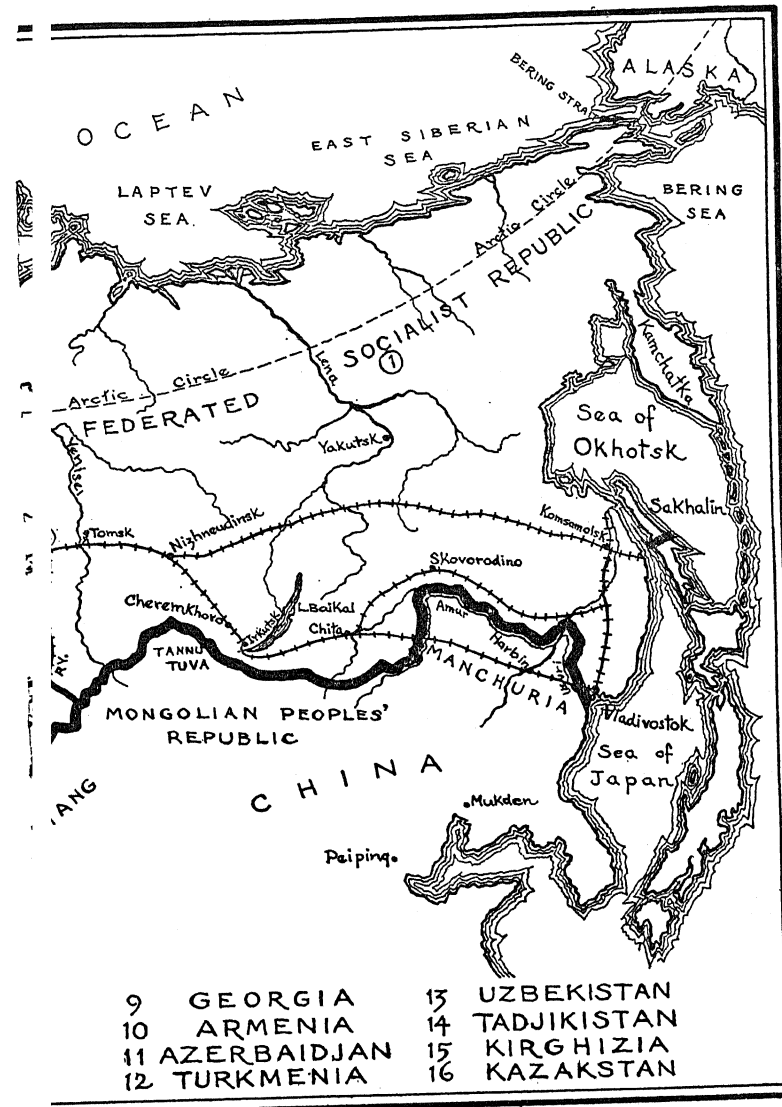
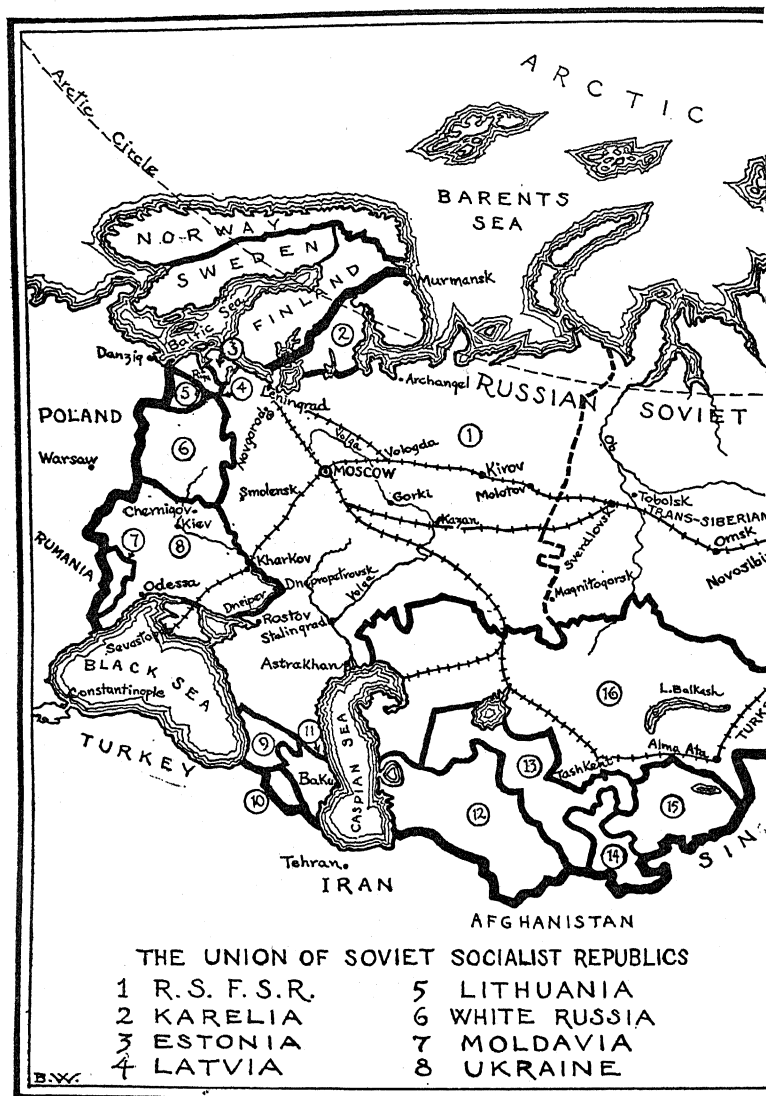
ward, the great industrial city, Kharkov. The Germans, eager to get at the oil of the Caucasus, moved on and took Odessa, after a two-month's siege, in October. And in October they concentrated all their forces in the central part of the front against Moscow, expecting to take it in a few weeks. "Russia is crushed," Hitler announced vaingloriously after all these victories. "It will never rise again."

But Russia was not crushed. Neither Moscow nor Leningrad fell. Hitler's army, like Napoleon's, found itself unprepared for the northern winter; and the defending armies gathered themselves together and struck back.

The Russians have always defended their country magnificently and have been its only defense. Not only the army but the people themselves have risen up to oppose any invader: the peasants and Cossacks did as much as the army to defeat Napoleon. Tolstoi's great novel, *War and Peace*, was printed now in millions of copies and widely read as the people met the invasion of a far worse enemy. But it was obvious, in 1941, that there was greater unity, far better organization, a stronger spirit in the Soviet people than there had been in other wars.

Whether the unity was forced or not, the country was united, from the Baltic to the Pacific and the Black Sea coasts. Whether the organization was ruthless or not, the country was organized and its complicated defense worked with amazing efficiency under heart-breaking difficulties.

As the enemy advanced and occupied the rich southern provinces, there was little panic, but orderly evacuation of the children and old people, the livestock and the machinery that could be sent away. Hundreds of thousands of children were sent eastward to cities on the Volga, to Central Asia and Siberia. Factories were dismantled, their machinery put on flat cars and sent eastward, protected from the weather sometimes by the bodies of the working men and women who cherished it as if it were their child. The machinery was set up again in the east in new buildings, built at breakneck speed, often on ground frozen hard as



iron; and often the new factories were producing again in a few weeks. All that remained was destroyed whenever possible. In August the great Dnieper Dam, the pride of Ukraine, was blown up with dynamite, so that the enemy should not profit by it.

But of course it was not possible to evacuate all the people or even to destroy everything the enemy might use. The people who remained met their foe with dignity and implacable enmity, excepting the discontented, on whom their neighbors took vengeance later. Often men and women stayed willingly behind, in order to form, when the Germans had passed through, guerrilla bands which sometimes grew into small armies, armed with captured weapons, and made the Germans' lives miserable. They did as the Cossacks had done a century before: captured small detachments and took their arms and supplies, blew up bridges and ammunition dumps, cut telephone and telegraph wires and blocked roads.

In Moscow and Leningrad, whose every able-bodied man was in the army, the women and old men and children dug long lines of trenches and tank traps all round the cities, were air wardens, cleared the debris of bombed and shelled buildings, and manned the factories where munitions and clothing and equipment for the army were produced night and day. Leningrad was besieged for two and a half years. For four months, from October, 1941, until the next February, no supplies whatever could reach it. The people starved and froze, giving the best they had to the children; but still they dug the trenches, stood the ceaseless bombardment stoically and worked in the great metal and textile factories until many quietly died at their benches.

All over the country the women took over the work of the men. For the army, which in the end amounted to fifteen million men, must be fed, clothed and armed. The people were strictly rationed, for the best must go to the army. It was clear that the Red Army was no longer the ill-fed, ill-supplied, scorned and

driven army of the Crimean, the Japanese, and the First World wars. It was, as far as was humanly possible, well-clothed, with warm felt boots, high-collared, padded coats, fur or sheepskin caps with warm ear flaps; it was well-fed and well-supplied and was, besides, the people's pride and joy. Every honor was paid both to officers and soldiers, and new decorations were created for its heroic deeds. Although discipline and respect for officers, gold braid and epaulets were restored, there was comradeship and mutual respect between officers and men. And the Red Army soldier knew how to do more than obey: he had initiative and enterprise and was able to leap to command if his officer fell. There was excellent nursing and medical care; even the seriously wounded often recovered and went eagerly back to battle.

For both love and hate impelled them. The defense of their homes and their country was common to all, for even the exiles abroad longed to take part in it. The many millions to whom a new life had been given fought with redoubled fury to preserve it. And soon hatred gave them a new strength. At first Stalin had said, "The war has been forced on us, not by the German people, not by the German workers, peasants and intellectuals, but by the clique of bloodthirsty Fascist rulers . . ." But it was soon evident that the invaders, whether proletarian or noble, Nazi or not, were possessed by the same stupid cruelty, the same lust for destruction, the blind obedience to orders that made this once civilized people more hateful than the Mongols whom they resembled.

From the end of 1941, when the Red Army was strong enough to withstand and to push back the enemy, and so went back over parts of the occupied land, until the war's end, it found food for hatred. For it found villages and towns completely destroyed, charred ruins in the place of prosperous farms, ditches filled with the dead bodies of children, streets lined with gallows on some of which still hung the bodies of men and women who had not truckled to the invader. Some towns seemed wholly empty, until perhaps an old woman crept out of a cellar and

told how all the people had been herded into cars and sent into slavery in Germany. When guerrilla bands joined the army, they told about the infernal gas-wagons, seemingly harmless trucks which were filled with people and then run until the gas from the exhaust had killed them all and the truck had reached some convenient spot where the bodies could be dumped. Massacres of whole Jewish populations, torture, the destruction of historic and cherished places — there seemed to be no evil that the German army did not commit. "Kill the German! Kill the German!" became the national slogan.

Every great war has its epic moments, which become the treasures of a nation's history. This war had many.

There was the siege of Leningrad, its quiet and patient heroism, the rescue from starvation over the frozen waters of Lake Ladoga, the later freeing of the railway to Moscow and its final liberation in February, 1944.

There was the battle of Moscow, where the Germans were first turned back. One day fifty German tanks had broken through at a place that only twenty-eight Russians were left to defend. "Russia is vast," their officer said to the twenty-seven, "but there is no place to retreat, for Moscow is behind us." They threw themselves, with hand grenades and rifles, against the German advance. Every man died, but the fifty tanks were stopped in their tracks.

There was the long underground war in the catacombs of Odessa after its capture. That great Black Sea port is built on limestone rock which has been quarried for centuries to build the city. As a result, deep passages and chambers lie under the streets and houses, and in these thousands of men and women lived, capturing and storing weapons, hiding people whom the Germans wanted to kill, fighting or harassing the enemy whenever they could. They contrived to hide the entrances and exits of these catacombs during the whole German occupation.

There were innumerable astonishing deeds of guerrilla warfare. The chairman of a collective farm, too old for army service, heard suddenly that the Germans were approaching. After arranging to send away the women and children with the livestock, he and two other men, unarmed, took to the woods. When the Germans came, the three men took weapons from sentries, then captured an armored car and finally a tank. With that they destroyed bridges, blew up ammunition dumps and made trouble generally, until at last the chairman alone, his companions having been killed, rejoined the Red Army. Women did the same sort of thing; children carried messages and food to guerrilla hide-outs. There are a thousand such stories.

But the peak of the war, the turning point, the highest degree of sustained resistance, was the battle of Stalingrad, which lasted for more than five months, from August 26th, 1942, to February 2nd, 1943.

The summer of 1942 was a grim one; for the Germans, recovering from the sufferings of the winter, abandoning their attack on Moscow, turned all their attention to the south and swept on toward the Caucasus. They still had an enormous advantage in tanks, planes and artillery, and in men, since the Russians had to leave strong defensive armies to protect Leningrad and Moscow and other strategic spots, in case the Germans changed their plans and suddenly attacked. The Germans had already invaded Crimea; in July they took Sevastopol, after a desperate resistance. They had taken and lost Rostov, which was the gateway to the Caucasus; now they took it again, crossed the Don and struck deep into the rich Kuban province, the pride of the Cossacks. "Russia's heart is bleeding," wrote the journalist Ehrenburg. "The enemy is trampling underfoot the rich fields of Kuban. He can already smell the oil of the Caucasus. The country is crying in its agony 'Cleanse me of the Germans!'"

But the Germans could not feel secure in the Caucasus, where the great oil fields lay, while the great new city of Stalingrad

guarded the Volga and threatened them from the north. Therefore they threw the strongest part of their southern forces against it.

Stalingrad stands on the west bank of the Volga, just north of where the great river turns sharply to run southeastward into the Caspian Sea. Directly across the river once stood Sarai, the rambling encampment of the Golden Horde; beyond that stretches eastward into Asia the arid steppe over which the Mongols had come. In the midst of Stalingrad there is a small hill, known as the kurgan, or burial mound, of Mamai, the Tartar leader whom Dmitri Donskoi put to flight. For centuries the city was a sleepy little half-Tartar town called Tsaritsyn; later, when railroads were built, it grew into an industrial center. During the Civil War Stalin directed a hard-fought battle there with the Whites, and it was renamed after him.

It was given great importance in the Five-Year Plans, because of its position on the Volga, its nearness to the oil of the Caucasus and the coal of the Donets Basin, its central position between the great southern provinces. It was connected by water with the Caspian Sea, by rail with the Black Sea and with Moscow. It was built into a great industrial city, stretching more than fifteen miles along the cliffs of the Volga, whose west bank, like that of many Russian rivers, is much higher than the east one. It produced tractors and harvesters, vehicles of all kinds, iron and steel and machinery; and oil was refined there. It became, in a period of ten years, a city of half a million people, with great factories — the “Red October,” the “Barricades,” the tractor plant — and settlements for the workmen, of pleasant houses or apartments and gardens; it had fine streets, big shops, theaters, clubs and government buildings, all very new and proud. In 1942 the factories were turning out tanks, trucks, airplanes and munitions.

On August 23rd the Germans were close enough to Stalingrad to smash it to pieces by air. They sent hundreds of planes over it in wave after wave, raining down bombs and incendiaries, as they had done over so many other cities. Within a few days the

city was a ruin. The outskirts were built of wood, as most Russian houses are. These caught fire and nothing could stop their complete destruction. Most of the brick and concrete buildings and the workers' houses were reduced to heaps of rubble. Thousands of citizens were killed; thousands more crossed the Volga in any boats they could find, under the shrieking menace of dive bombers and the deadly chatter of machine guns. On August 26th, after thus opening the way, the Germans entered the city.

The Russians, outnumbered nearly ten to one, outnumbered in planes and tanks, driven now for a thousand miles in grim retreat across their country, took their stand in the buildings and factories and the rubble of the city, set their teeth and said, "Not one more step back!" For all the Soviet Union, and the rest of the world as well, knew that the time of decision had come: if the Germans took Stalingrad, victory, at least in European Russia, might easily be theirs; if the Russians held Stalingrad, all of Hitler's evil plans might come to nothing.

The Russians had almost no help from their allies at this time, although they were not fighting alone, as the British had been in 1940 and 1941. Britain had immediately declared itself the ally of the Soviet Union in June, 1941, but could not reach it with any military help. The United States had also entered the war in December, 1941, but it had to fight across two oceans, against both Germany and Japan, and would not land its soldiers in Europe until 1943 and then too far away to be of any help. The R.A.F. had begun to bomb German cities and industries, thus keeping many German planes at home for defense, and both Britain and America sent supplies, planes and vehicles to Russia. But very little reached its destination before 1943; Russia's own factories, working day and night, many of them carried from Ukraine and set up anew in the Urals, saved it and turned back the tide of Hitler's conquests.

Like Dmitri Donskoi, the Red Army in Stalingrad had its back against a river. A Comsomol wrote to Stalin, saying in his letter, "For me, there is no land across the Volga." And there

was no thought of retreat beyond the river. By the end of September the Russians were driven into a narrow strip of ruined land, often only a few hundred yards wide, along the bank. Behind them were the steep cliffs, which provided deep and safe dugouts for headquarters, for temporary hospitals, for civilians who had not been able to cross the river. And from across the river came a steady flow of supplies that made the defense of the city possible. For the Germans held the west bank of the Volga both north and south of the city, and also the railway. Help could come only from the eastern bank, across the wide expanse of water where, night and day, it was exposed to fire from German planes and artillery.

But it never stopped coming. Food was sent, so that in the beleaguered buildings and foxholes of rubble, hot meals in thermos containers came to the soldiers. The precious vodka came, that enabled men to go for days and nights without sleep, that kept them going when otherwise their strength would have failed. Medical supplies were brought to the devoted nurses and doctors who cared for the wounded until these, too, could be ferried across the river to hospitals safe on the quiet steppe. Ammunition and rifles were carried across and thousands of soldiers came over, quietly, in the dead of night, to take the places of the thousands of dead and wounded. Most of the crossing was done in little boats which could escape more easily the flares and the bullets of enemy planes. At one time Mamai's Mound was held by the Germans; from its height they could see over the cliffs and use their artillery directly against the river crossings. This was a terrible danger; but the Mound was won back after desperate fighting and the river was so much the safer. The worst time came in late October when the ice began to form but was not yet strong enough to bear a heavy burden. For a long time the boats had to make their way between ice floes coming down the current, which made their crossing four times as long as usual. Then, when the ice had formed but was still thin, men and women crawled on their hands and knees, pushing on little sleds food or

cartridges or one or two rifles, as much as their practiced senses felt the ice would bear.

In spite of the difficulty, they rejoiced when "General Winter" came to their aid; for they knew how to live with him, and their enemies, as usual, lacked warm clothing and did not know how to bear weather thirty and forty degrees below zero.

For three months incredible fighting went on in the ruined city. The Germans' "blitz" worked against themselves, for the rubble was piled so high that their best weapons, the tanks, could not move over it, while it provided excellent shelter and barricades for the defenders. Men fought for days for one street, for a building, for a staircase, for a room. They dug into cellars; they made forts of ruined houses. They created a new kind of warfare — "sandwich fighting" — which meant that a group of men held one floor of a building while the enemy held the floor above and the floor below. The best weapons were the hand grenade, the rifle and bayonet.

Time after time, during those months, the Germans hurled the full strength of two of their best armies and their airforce against the remnants of the city. The roar of guns and planes and bombs was one continuous battering, deafening sound whose vibrations could shatter a glass tumbler standing in a dugout. Hundreds of men died in winning or losing or regaining one street or one hundred yards. But the defenders held firm and, as the city did not fall, the morale of the defenders increased, while that of the enemy weakened, depressed as they were by the strange and bitter cold. It was an honor for a Russian to be sent to Stalingrad, a punishment for a German. The Russians were cool, orderly and neat; they washed and shaved and did not miss the steaming weekly immemorial bath. The Germans became dirty, lice-ridden, diseased; and, as time went on, discouraged. Hitler had promised the fall of Stalingrad long ago.

The peak of the attacks was reached in October and the city still stood. The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Revolution, on November 7th, was celebrated all over the Soviet Union with

assurance and hope, and in every paper was printed the letter the defenders of Stalingrad had written to Stalin: ". . . We are writing to you at the height of the great battle, in the midst of the din of an unceasing cannonade and the roar of aircraft and the red glow of fires . . . We are writing to say that our spirit is stronger than ever, our will is as strong as steel and our arms are not tired of striking the enemy. Our decision is to stand firm, stand to the last man at the walls of Stalingrad . . ."

The defenders of the city were few, partly because so much of the Red Army had to defend the rest of the immense front, partly because the narrow strip they held would not give footing to many reinforcements. But the High Command did not intend to make the battle a purely defensive one. This was to be the turning point, the time when the invaders must be turned back. They planned to clasp the Germans, from without, in a deadlier embrace than Stalingrad had received; to encircle the armies that were in the city and crush them there to death. They had, by the beginning of November, assembled more men than the Germans had; their factories, working in three shifts day and night, had matched and surpassed the number of enemy planes and tanks.

This counter blow was prepared during the autumn and delivered in November. The Germans must be taken unawares. It was not easy to advance upon them secretly over the treeless steppe that surrounds the besieged city; but knowledge of the steppe and the memory of continuous warfare there, were bred in Russian bones. They advanced as they had in Tartar days. They moved at night; by day they hid in villages and in the many ravines, filled with shrubs and small trees, that run from the steppe into the rivers, to carry off the melting snow in spring. They converged from the north, from the southwest, and the south, planning to join their forces at a point a few miles west of Stalingrad. The Germans, whose only reliance was on force, who always thought too highly of themselves and too little of other people, suspected nothing.

In the dark, early morning of November 19th, the men in the

dugouts heard the thunder of distant cannon and rejoiced. In four days the encircling armies met as they had planned to do, and trapped three hundred and thirty thousand Germans in Stalingrad.

From then on, the enemy was on the defensive. To be sure, they still surrounded the Russian forces in the city, except on the river side; but now, they too were surrounded. Their supplies were cut off and for a while their food was carried in by air. But Russian fliers shot down the transport planes, and Germany could not spare as many planes as it had before because its own cities were being smashed, day and night, by British and American bombers, and must be defended. So the Germans in Stalingrad starved and froze as Napoleon's Grand Army had done before them. They held on doggedly, however, as they were told to do, for more than two months. One attempt was made to break through the Russian embrace and rescue them, but it failed. The winter cold increased and the Russian encirclement deepened around them. They dug deep into the ruins they had made, and defended themselves as best they could.

In January groups of Germans began to surrender. At the end of that month the encircling army broke through to the defending army — a happy day. On the last day of January, in the basement of what had once been a big department store, Field Marshal von Paulus surrendered to a young Russian lieutenant. Two days later the last of the German army in Stalingrad surrendered; but of the three hundred and thirty-thousand who had been trapped, only ninety-one thousand were alive.

The name Stalingrad was known round the world. In all the countries fighting against Hitler, people spoke its name with a deep breath of relief, when the Germans surrendered. But to the Soviet Union Stalingrad was a shout of triumph that sent them into victorious battle along a thousand-mile front against the hated enemy.

From then on — although victory was hard-won; although

the Germans fought well and stubbornly; although the war was not over for another two years and more, and millions of lives were yet to be lost — the Red Army was driving the enemy out and freeing the land and the people from the intolerable burden of his presence.

As soon as they lost Stalingrad, the Germans fled from the Caucasus, for the victorious army was sweeping down toward Rostov, to cut them off. Pursued by the Russian Caucasian army and harassed by Cossack bands, they fled as quickly as they had come. In February Rostov was liberated and the Germans driven westward. In January the tragic siege of Leningrad was lifted: the railway to the east was freed and those Russians who had not died of cold and hunger were fed and warmed again. The whole front moved westward. There was no superiority on the German side now. Factories were producing everything that was needed for war: excellent anti-tank weapons and a huge Russian tank that the Germans could not cope with; so many airplanes that their airforce was greater than the weakened German force. Besides, great quantities of supplies were now coming from Britain and America, by way of Murmansk and Persia. To move over the wide expanses of Russia hundreds of thousands of vehicles were needed; and hundreds of thousands of jeeps and trucks began to arrive, as well as planes and food and medical supplies.

The Red Army swept back over its own invaded land. In the summer of 1943, after Stalingrad, they retook the great industrial city, Kharkov, and reached the Dnieper. In September they took back that ancient fortress, Smolensk, that had seen, since the beginning of its history, so much bitter fighting. In November they won back Kiev and in the early winter of 1944 entered Poland, announcing at the same time that the Soviet Union intended to keep the eastern half of that country, which it had occupied in 1939.

In the winter of 1944 they pushed the Germans out of Novgorod and fought over the old battlegrounds of Lake Peipus, where Alexander Nevsky had defeated the Teutonic Knights long ago.

They entered Rumania and in the spring won back Odessa and began to drive the Germans from Crimea, retaking Sevastopol in May. Each victory was announced with salvos of cannon from the Kremlin and a great show of fireworks at night. In 1944 Russian soil was cleansed of the invaders and along a wide front the Red Army marched on into Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the western half of Poland. And now their allies were fighting with them in Europe.

In November, 1942, British and American forces had landed in Africa; in 1943 they landed in Italy; in 1944 they landed in Normandy and drew off some of the German power that had, until then, been concentrated against the Soviet Union. When they landed in Normandy in June of that year and fought their way eastward, the Germans — whose great cities and industries were already smashed into ruins, even as they had smashed Stalingrad and London and Warsaw and many others — were caught between gigantic forces which they had blindly disregarded.

In April, 1945, the Russian and American armies met in the heart of Germany, on the river Elbe. In April, too, the Red Army entered Berlin, which looked very much like Stalingrad and where, for nearly two weeks, they fought the same kind of fantastic warfare they had waged in Stalingrad; for modern warfare, alas, makes cities, instead of open plains, its battlefields. The Germans contested every street and used the subways and the sewers for underground passages, emerging in unexpected places or blowing up the pavement under the Russians' feet. Early in May, however, they gave up, as the Russians had not done at Stalingrad.

On May 8th, the whole of Germany surrendered to the Allies. Its wretched leader, powerful in evil-doing, had perished amid the ruins of his once proud capital. So had Mussolini died miserably in Italy. On the 9th, thirty salvos of artillery from a thousand cannon announced the end of the war to the joyful crowds in Moscow.

The Soviet Union had taken very little part in the war against Japan, although there had been some border fighting in Manchuria at first. China had waged that war alone from 1937 until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in December, 1941, and so drew the United States and Great Britain into the war in the Pacific. After Germany surrendered, Stalin agreed to join the war against Japan in three months; and, to the day, on August 8th, he sent the Red Army into Manchuria. Two days before that, however, the first atomic bomb, that dread child of World War II, had fallen on Hiroshima, and in less than a week Japan surrendered unconditionally. On every front the hideous work of destruction came to an end.

In April of that same eventful year most of the nations of the world, excepting those that had taken a shameful part in creating or furthering this second and most terrible world war, met in San Francisco and drew up a charter for the organization known as the United Nations. This was the second attempt to set up some kind of control over the actions of nations and to prevent such overwhelming catastrophes as the First and Second World wars. The League of Nations, in whose charter, or covenant, Russia had had no part, was the first attempt. In this new organization, however, the Soviet Union was one of the five nations who would be most responsible for world peace; the other four were China, France, Great Britain and the United States. The Soviet Union would not again be considered a second-class nation, or be shut out from the councils of those who called themselves the Great Powers.

The power of recovery, the constant upspringing of life, is an amazing and happy part of human history, which is so filled with the senseless killing of man by man, and the equally senseless destruction of the beautiful work of his hands.

As soon as the miserable remnant of the German army had laid down its arms in Stalingrad, people came back from across the Volga, from holes in the cliffs, out of cellars, and began to

rebuild their city. Women and children began to clear the mountains of rubble and to lay any whole bricks or stones they found one upon another to make houses for themselves. One of the heroines of the war was a schoolteacher who, after her day's work was over, got other teachers together to rebuild and repair and finally, during the spring and summer, organized thousands of citizens into rebuilding groups. Before winter, the people had prepared enough homes for the fifty thousand workers who were back at the Red October and the Barricades factories again. The factories turned out tanks and munitions during the rest of the war and everything they shipped out was marked "Answer from Stalingrad." Help poured in, too, from all over the Union. Clothes and furniture and food and volunteer workers came from all sides to the heroic city.

It was the same everywhere as the tide of war ebbed to the west. The same organization that had made an overwhelming victory possible was turned to reconstruction. The effort was almost like that of a new war, for the destruction had been terrific; but it was hopeful and constructive work, and the people, without repining and without undue mourning for the millions dead, threw themselves into it with the same energy and discipline they had used, so short a time before, in the Five-Year Plans.

In the south, across the wide, thousand-mile swath of invasion, thousands of towns, tens of thousands of villages and factories had been ruined. The railway cars the Germans used had a narrower gauge than the Russian ones; therefore all the rails were changed to fit their cars and had to be changed back before the Russians could use them again. A hundred thousand prosperous collective and state farms had been destroyed; more than half the cattle, horses and other farm animals had been killed or driven away; almost all the precious harvesters and plows, the seeders and tractors had been sent to Germany or destroyed. Schools, libraries and hospitals had been the special targets of the de-educated, brutalized enemy. A German colonel's order

was found, which stated, "The zone to be evacuated must look like a desert, after the withdrawal of our troops." It seemed at first as if all the gains of the Revolution, so laboriously and hopefully won, had been lost.

There was great sorrow, too, as the Red Army entered the ancient cities of the south and east, which held, in their old buildings, the treasures of Russia's history. Kiev, the beloved city on the bluff above the Dnieper, chosen by Oleg as the mother of Russian cities, was largely ruined; Odessa, too, and Kharkov, an old city newly built up as a great industrial center. The imperial palaces and gardens of Peterhof and Tsarskoe Selo, filled with memories of Peter and Catherine, were gone; once-proud Novgorod had lost its kremlin, and the sturdy little whitewashed St. Sophia, built by Yaroslav in 1047, was blown up in sheer spite as the Germans were driven from the city. Museums were sacked of whatever the Russians had not been able to remove; libraries were burned; and cherished places, like Tolstoi's or Tchaikovski's houses, were defiled and damaged.

But far worse was the fate of those people who had not been evacuated, who had met the arrogant mercilessness of these latest invaders. As one city after another, one area or republic after another, was liberated, it was found that hundreds of thousands of people had been sent to Germany into slavery, either in industry or on farms or in German households, and that many of these had died of starvation or ill-treatment. There were hundreds of thousands of children, homeless or crippled, half-starved or blinded; but the country was ready, as it had not been after the First World War, with homes and hospitals and foster-parents, for these most pitiful victims of war. As the Army entered Germany, they found that the hundreds of thousands of prisoners of war, captured during the first years of the war, had suffered the same inhuman treatment as those who had been taken into slavery. And in Poland they found the unbelievable slaughter-camps of Majdanek and Auschwitz.

The unprovoked invasion, the destruction of so much that

was useful and precious, the enormous loss of life, the pitiful plight of children, and all the needless suffering, were a grave wound in the body of the new nation; and, in the memory of the people, the old wounds of Napoleon's invasion, of the Mongol conquest, of the ceaseless Tartar raids ached as the old wounds of the body sometimes ache.

From this grave injury the Soviet land and people are recovering now.

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